

A parent is a child's first and most important teacher, which is why the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 recognizes parents' vital role in education.

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

The first five years of a child's life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, and cognitive **growth**. The amount of support children receive during these **early** years can be strongly connected to the level of **SUCCESS** they achieve later in life. Children whose families **involve** them in activities that allow them to **wonder** and **experiment** often take pleasure in learning, which motivates them to **learn** more. For example, when children are provided with an environment rich in both written and oral language, they acquire essential **skills** for learning how to read. Children who enter school without these skills may risk falling behind their peers.

All families want their children to receive a **quality** education and **perform** well in school. The *No Child Left Behind Act*, the national effort to **improve** education, aims to make this desire a reality by holding schools accountable for children's learning. This brochure is based on the larger *Helping Your Child* series of publications for parents and families, which is **designed** to **provide** parents with the latest research and practical information to help them **support** their children and ensure their children's success in school and in life.



# helping your preschool child

**NoChild**  
LeftBehind  
U.S. Department of Education

## activities

### Letters, letters, everywhere (ages three to five)

Sharing the alphabet with children helps them learn letter names and shapes, and link the letters to the sounds of oral language.

#### What you need:

- ★ Alphabet book, alphabet blocks, and alphabet magnets,
- ★ Paper,
- ★ Pencils, crayons, and markers, and
- ★ Glue.

#### What to do:

- ★ With your child, print the letters of his or her name on paper and say each letter as you write it. Make a name sign for his or her room or other special place. For added fun, your child can decorate the sign.
- ★ Teach your child "The Alphabet Song" and play games using the alphabet. Some alphabet books have songs and games that you and your child can learn together.
- ★ Look for educational videos, DVDs, CDs, and television shows such as "Between the Lions" and "Sesame Street" that feature letter-learning activities for young children. Watch these programs with your child and join in with the rhymes and songs.
- ★ Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth, safe metal surface. Ask your child to name the letters and the words he or she may be trying to spell.
- ★ Whenever you are with your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines.
- ★ Line up alphabet blocks and have your child say the name of each letter. Your child can use these blocks to spell his or her name.

The ages between birth and age five are the foundation upon which successful lives are built.

—Mrs. Laura Bush

## tips for parents

The following checklist, although not exhaustive, can help guide you as you prepare your child for school. It is best to look at the items as goals, which should be accomplished, as much as possible, through everyday routines or enjoyable activities with your child. If your child lags behind in some areas, do not worry. Remember that children grow and develop at different rates.

### Good health and physical well-being

My child:

- Eats a balanced diet and gets plenty of rest;
- Receives regular medical and dental care, and has had all necessary immunizations;
- Runs, jumps, plays outdoors, and participates in other active pursuits; and
- Works on puzzles, scribbles, colors, paints, and engages in other creative activities.

### Social and emotional preparation

My child:

- Is learning to explore and try new things;
- Is beginning to work well independently;
- Has opportunities to be with other children and is learning to cooperate;
- Is curious and motivated to learn; and
- Can follow simple instructions.

### Language and general knowledge

My child:

- Has many opportunities to talk and listen;
- Is read to every day and has access to books and other reading materials;
- Watches television when monitored by an adult;
- Is encouraged to solve problems and sort and classify things;
- Is learning to count and plays counting games;
- Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
- Has opportunities to draw, dance, and listen to and make music.

## resources

This brochure was drawn from the larger booklet in the *Helping Your Child* series, "Helping Your Preschool Child," which provides tips, resources, and fun activities that parents can use with children from infancy through age five. For more information on how you can help your child succeed in school and in life, visit the *Helping Your Child* series Web site at [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html).

**For more information on how you can help your preschool child, take a look at the following resources from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations:**

**U.S. Department of Education:** [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or 1-800-USA-LEARN

**The Parents Portal:** [www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml)

**Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE):**  
[www.ed.gov/free/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html)

**Parental Information and Resource Centers:**  
[www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

**Head Start:** [www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb)

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