

Helping Your Child Grow

Activities for 54 to 72 months



Your child will soon be going to kindergarten. Now they will have relationships with many people outside of the home. Some days at school may be difficult. Your child will need your advice and encouragement. Make sure your child knows they can talk to you. Make time to relax and de-stress after the day. Both of you need time to reconnect with each other after spending a long day apart.

Nighttime Check-Ins

Have a check-in with your child at bedtime: "How was your day?" "What was fun?" "Did anything hard happen?" Your child may have some worries about their day. Friendships may be upsetting or confusing. With your support and reassurance, they can clear their mind of worries before bedtime. This will make it easier for them to fall and stay asleep.

Move Your Body!

Exercise supports healthy bodies and minds. Make sure your child gets a lot of exercise every day. It is important for you, too. Dancing with them is fun. Turn on different kinds of music. Add some props to the show. Take turns showing your dance moves. Your child will love it if you get silly. Get the whole family dancing! You can take turns picking out the music.

Race the Clock

Helping out is an important part of being in a family. Try different ways to make cleanup time fun. Try "race the clock": "I wonder how fast you can put away your toys. I'll time you. Are you ready? On your mark, get set, go!" You might need to break bigger jobs into steps or provide other direction. Try using a flashlight: "I'll shine the light on what you can put away. Ready? Go!"

Potlucks and Picnics

Make time in your busy lives for family and friends. Open up your child's world to people you like and trust. Help them plan a simple potluck or picnic and invite friends and family to attend. Your child can make invitations. Connecting with other people feels good. These visits will be good for both you and them!

School Days

Ask a librarian to help you find good books about going to kindergarten. Reading them will help your child think about their own feelings. Talk with them about what happened in the story. Ask your child questions about how they are feeling: "What do you think about going to school? How are you feeling?" They might be feeling excited and nervous at the same time.

What Do You See?

Find a quiet place outdoors. Lie under a tree at a park. Look at the leaves. Listen to the sounds. Talk about what the cloud shapes look like: "I see an elephant!" Take time to enjoy the beauty of the natural world. Your child might want to sit quietly and draw something they see. Being in nature is calming. Teach them other ideas for calming too, such as breathing in and out slowly.

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All About Me

When your child goes to school, they will need to know some basic information about themselves. Help them make an "All About Me" book. Include your child's full name on a page in big, easy-to-write letters. Include a page with the names of family members. Include a phone number page. Your child can draw pictures for each page. Read the book often. Another trick to help them learn this information is to sing it. Choose a familiar tune and "sing" the phone number song. Singing may make it easier for your child to remember.

Map It

Help your child make a map of your neighborhood. Include the school where they will go for kindergarten. Ask, "Where do our friends live? Do we have other family members in the neighborhood?" Knowing the neighborhood is part of growing up. Your child won't feel so far from home if they know the way home.

Stop, Look, and Listen!

Teach your child about general safety rules. Start with crossing the street. Your child should never do this alone, but they can learn the rules to follow. Teach them how to 1) stop; 2) look both ways; and 3) listen for cars. Practice crossing streets. Have your child tell you when it is safe to cross. Let them know that they did a good job staying safe and following the rules.

Supper Chats

Dinnertime is a good time to connect after a busy day. Ask each person at the table, "What was the best thing that happened today?" "What made you laugh today?" Avoid asking questions with "yes" or "no" answers. Ask open-ended questions instead: "Tell me about your day." "What happened first?" "Then what happened?" Open-ended questions invite your child to share details about the day. You may need to start the conversation. Make this a ritual. Over time, your child will come to the meal with daily events to share.

Mealtime Helper

Your child will take pride in helping with tasks around the house, such as setting the table. Do it together the first few times. Ask your child how many people will be at the table and how many of each item they need. Don't worry about how the place settings look. "You set the table! Everyone has a plate, cup, fork, and napkin. Thanks for helping!"

Fancy Dinner

Host a "fancy dinner." Your child can make special place cards for everyone. Have them decorate a small square of paper for each "guest," then fold the paper in half so it stands up. Help your child write each person's name on a card and set all the cards on the table. They will enjoy making dinner a special time.

My Family Book

Help your child create a book about their family with paper, glue, scissors, photographs (or copies), and pictures from newspapers or magazines. They can decorate the book with crayons or stickers. Talk with your child about what they want to put in the family book. Ask, "Who is in our family?" "What types of activities does our family like?" "Where is our family from?" "What kinds of food does our family eat?" "What kind of music does our family like?"

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Story Boxes

Find several big cardboard boxes. Fill each with materials your child can use for a different pretend-play scene. Some examples are a grocery store, an office, a restaurant, or a shoe store. Include different materials in each story box, and let your child's imagination take it from there. Give them some paper, markers, tape, and scissors to make menus, bills, money, or other items that build on their idea. Find a place in your house where they can keep the pretend-play scene set up for a few days.

Family Stories

Record a family member reading your child's favorite stories aloud. Are there family members who do not live with you, or someone your child does not see often? This is a nice way your child can be "with" the person. They can follow along in the book or just listen. If you have headphones, your child can listen in a quiet place.



NEWSLETTER

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

54 to 72 months

Your child will soon be off to kindergarten. You may feel happy, sad, or worried about this new step for your child. It can be difficult to see your baby grow up and go out in the world. Many parents feel a sense of loss during this time. Talk about these feelings with someone you trust. Your child may also have mixed feelings. They might be both excited and worried about starting kindergarten. Prepare yourself and them for this big step. Visit the new school. Meet the teacher. Help your child make a friend before the school year starts. Getting more information will help both of you feel confident about the change.

I Like You, I Like Me

One of the best things you can do for your child is to help them feel good about themselves. Talk to them about their strengths. "Wow. You run so fast! It's amazing." Avoid criticizing or shaming your child. Talk positively about them in front of other people. Talk positively about yourself too! Thinking and hearing positive thoughts is very powerful—for both of you.

Right and Wrong

Your child is starting to explore ideas about good and bad behavior. They are thinking about what is fair and what is not. Your child might lie or take things that do not belong to them. It is completely normal to try out these behaviors. Stay calm. Talk to your child about right and wrong. Let them know that everyone makes mistakes and that you will always love them.

Special Times

Your child loves to spend time with friends but needs special time just with you. They want your attention above anyone else's. Your child wants to tell you about their day and will love to make you laugh. They have ideas and questions about how the world works. Spend some time every day playing with, talking to, and getting to know your child. They are growing fast and becoming their own little person.

Friends Forever

Friends are important to your child now. They may be able to play with a friend for a long time without conflicts. Your child has learned play strategies such as sharing, trading, and turn-taking. If their feelings get hurt during playtime with a friend, encourage your child to talk to their friend: "I didn't like it when you yelled at me. It made me sad." Teach them how to listen respectfully to their friends and how to say they are sorry.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

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Your Child's Social-Emotional Development, 54–72 months

Learning to Self-Calm

Your child has fewer and fewer meltdowns. They may often be able to identify, name, and talk about their feelings—but there are still times that are hard! Find a time when your child is *not* upset and talk about calming strategies. Ask, “What can you do when you have a big feeling to help yourself calm down?” Teach them calming strategies such as deep breathing, taking a break, doing a different activity, or talking to someone about their feelings. Learning these skills now will help your child throughout life.

Rest and Relaxation

Think about how busy your and your child's lives are. Are you feeling stressed? If you are, chances are your child is feeling stressed too. Do both of you need more time to relax? As your child begins school, this will become more and more important. Limit the number of activities your child does. Make sure they have some “down time” every day. Stay consistent with bedtime and wake-up times so both of you are rested and ready for the day.

More Peas, Please!

Mealtimes are great times to learn about manners and how to be polite. It may be important in your family to say “please,” “thank you,” and “you're welcome.” Mealtimes are times to use manners and encourage your child's manners. Mealtimes are also times to learn “rules” for talking. Rules might include looking at the person you are talking to and listening to the person who is speaking. “It's your brother's turn to talk. Put on your listening ears.”

It's My Body

Teach your child to say “no, thank you” if they do not want a hug or kiss. Teach them to respect other people's bodies as well. Let your child know it is never okay for someone to look at or touch their private parts, except a doctor if needed during a health check-up. Remind your child about these things. Let your child know that secrets about bodies are never okay. Let your child know they can always talk to you about their thoughts and feelings.

Day-to-Day Helpers

As your child gets older, they can take more responsibility throughout the day. Choose routine jobs that are not too difficult so your child can feel successful. Watering plants, feeding pets, setting and helping clear the table, and folding towels are examples. Make sure you let them know you appreciate their help and how important it is to the family. Your child will feel pride in their growing ability to help.



Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. Your child develops healthy relationships by interacting with real people. Your child develops skills, confidence, and pride in themselves by participating in real-life activities. Television shows and games can't help develop these important skills that your child needs for success in school and in life.