



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

Writing a simple 'thank you' note

An important social skill is the writing of a thank-you note.

As adults, most of us know the surprise and delight we feel when we receive a thank-you note from a child.

Even preschoolers can be coached to dictate a note to a friend, relative, or grandparent. Often a single sentence of gratitude is sufficient.

Most kids can be encouraged to draw a picture of how the gift is being used, or a picture of the gift itself that can be sent along.

Taking time to express thanks shows children that we value others' thoughtfulness, a value we want to instill in our children. □

Thank you!



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

October, 2019

Vol. 35 No. 10

Parenting

Making the transition from work to home

Whether you work at home or out of the home, the time between 4:30 and 6:30pm can be demanding. Here are a few reasons why:

- Parents and children are shifting from the busy day to the slower pace of dinner and family time.

- Children and parents may be physically tired and hungry.

- Parents are letting go of the workplace role and taking on the role of mom or dad.

Here are a few suggestions to help make this time period move more smoothly for all of you:

- Take time to change clothes as soon as you get home. Save some particularly comfortable trousers or sweatpants and roomy shirts for that time only.

- Save errands for one afternoon or weekend morning. Don't wear yourself out by fighting rush hour traffic any more than you have to.

- Ask everyone to help with evening chores. Four-year-olds can pick up newspapers and put them away. Five-year-olds can set the table. Seven-year-olds can feed the pets.

- Relax at least 15 minutes before you jump into chores and meal preparation. Cuddle with the children, chat with your spouse.

- Don't turn on the television. The noise and distractions only add stress.

- Ignore the urge to clean the moment you arrive at home. An immaculate home is almost a lost cause when you have small children, so don't get crazy over it.

- Keep back-up meal items in the pantry so you can avoid a five o'clock trip to the store.

- Offer the family a light, nutritious snack during the transition time. Cheese and crackers, a dish of grapes or a breadstick can soothe hunger pangs.

- Take time for the small things. Sit on the porch for a few minutes and chat about the day.

Notice your three-year-old's finger-painted picture.

Rock the baby.

Walk to the bird feeder to see how much food the birds ate today.

Transition time can be hectic ... or helpful.

Why not think up some useful ideas of your own to make that time period one of the best in your day! □

Why do you ask?

A good friend had a favorite response to questions from his older children. After they had posed their question, he would say, "Why do you ask?"

As he explained it, this allowed him not only time to consider his answer, but also gave him the understanding of why this information was important to the child.

For example, when his son asked how much money the family had in savings, behind his question hid the concern about a friend's family where a parent had lost his job. "Why do you ask?" becomes a useful tool for meaningful communication with older children.

But as any parent of a young child can tell you, the countless questions posed by their youngsters in a day cannot be handled so easily.

The never-ending "why" conversation, the back-and-forth of questions and answers can make even the most reasonable parent retreat to an emphatic "I don't know any more answers today!"

The query sometimes arises whether those endless questions are really genuine attempts to figure out the world, or rather just a method for prolonging the conversation and getting wanted parental attention.

Recent studies show that children really do want answers to their questions, and are indeed sorting out the explanations to learn from them.

Children are not just passive in their learning process; they actively solicit information. And I do mean active!

Preschoolers average nearly seventy-five questions per hour! Do the math—that means hundreds of

thousands of questions in the early years! As one individual said recently, perhaps my name should be *Grandma Google!*

Pay attention to the stream of preschool questions, and you will see that they tend to follow on from one another; one question logically leads to the next one.

Researchers find that kids are sensitive to whether their questions are answered adequately.

If they receive an empty or inadequate response, they repeat the question they just asked, or ask another question.

When they get the information they're after, they are satisfied, or might use the next question to press for details, or to differentiate from something they already know.

"Why" questions are particularly common, making us consider that explanations must be helping kids in some special way.

It seems that children don't just want more information about the world. They want to understand causes and connections, things that will help them understand the world in a deeper way and enable future learning. And the repetition until they get it shows us how powerful this impulse to learn is.

While this helps us appreciate the need to respond to questions, we have to recognize that we can't answer every single question, or even feel guilty when we just don't know or can't go beyond an exasperated, "That's just the way it is!"

Young children are persistent. They will continue to try to get the information they want and need. Just remember that there is a good reason why they ask. □

Who is the Mystery Leader?

You'll need a group to play this intriguing game.

Start by selecting someone to be "it" who then leaves the room.

Then select the person who is going to be the Mystery Leader.

This person begins some action, like clapping hands or tapping feet on the floor, and everyone else in the group does the same thing, at the same time.

The Mystery Leader continues by changing to a new action such as nodding her head, for example. Each person on the group then does what the Mystery Leader is doing. Practice doing this together.

Next the person who is "it" is called back into the room.

At this point the Mystery Leader begins tapping or clapping or whatever, and changes the action from time to time.

Once again, each group member follows the Leader's actions.

The job of the person who is "it" is to discover which person is the Mystery Leader by watching group members closely to see who is changing the action.

Group members can try to protect the Leader's identity by not looking at the Leader or purposely looking at the wrong person.

You can add rules of your own about who is "it" next time, about how many guesses each person gets, and so on.

This game is lots of fun—and it helps children learn to carefully observe. □

Encouraging the young artist

To encourage young children to become interested in creating their own artwork, start them out by providing them with their own art supplies.

A fishing tackle box with plenty of compartments makes an excellent art box.

A personal box for each child encourages creativity and the development of longer attention span.

Children are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own supplies as they take out, use, and put them away.

A basic art box would include crayons, colored chalk, plastic or sound-tipped scissors, watercolor set, paper, marking pens, tape, colored, pencils, and glue.

Materials can be added or subtracted to the art box according to the child's ability to use the equipment properly.

Incidentally, new or special items for the art box can be given as gifts on various occasions during the year.

In the same ways, young artists' creations become keepsake gifts for family and friends to treasure..

A few rules for creative projects may be in order, such as cleaning up afterward, and taking some precautions ahead of time to prevent a mess.

A large plastic tablecloth reserved for art projects works well to protect a work area.

There is no better time to foster creativity than while children are young. Creativity can litter a kitchen floor in minutes, but the results can be extremely worthwhile. □

The importance of make-believe

Matthew grabs a big cardboard box and decides to go to the "store."

He pushes the box around the living room, looking for the "groceries" his family needs—a plastic cup, a newspaper, a toy—and drops them into the box.

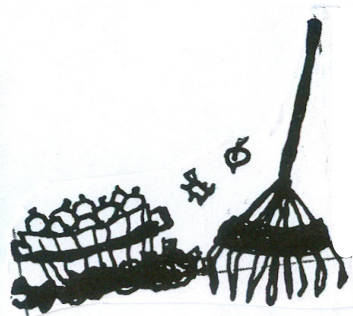
He pretends to pay for his purchases and then proudly tells his parent, "I bought our food!"

Make-believe is a necessary facet of a child's play. Pretending gives him the chance to:

- Imitate adults to help him understand his environment;
- Re-enact familiar situations, both good and bad, as a way of dealing with emotions;
- Develop his imagination by creating fantasies; and
- Learn about himself as an individual and how he fits into society.

When your child pretends, he isn't receiving outside commands or controls—he's **IN** control! So, he can take his every-day, routine world and turn it into a magic place.

Your child will start by imitating you around the house, and will progress through the years to more "dramatic acting"—possibly even becoming the commander of a vital space mission to Mars! □



"I don't like you anymore!"

When parents make a decision their children don't like, youngsters can find many ways to express their disappointment.

However, parents need not feel threatened when their children heartily protest.

Crying or yelling, "I don't like you, you're a mean daddy," really means that the child doesn't like the restriction placed on her freedom. We can all understand those feelings.

While it isn't easy sometimes to put up with children's protests, parents who look past the moment know they will have to take some unpopular stands sometimes.

Allowing children the right to be unhappy and to voice that unhappiness are necessary parts of learning how to deal with frustration.

Parents can accept their children's right to dislike these decisions by saying, "I know you'd rather keep on playing, but you need a nap," or "I'm sorry you don't want to go to bed now, but it's time."

In using statements like these, the child's feelings are recognized, while the decision still stands. □

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996 ©2019 Growing Child, Inc. Telephone: (765) 464-0920. Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.














Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

www.growingchild.com

October 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Can you whistle a tune? Play a harmonica?</p> 	<p>Ask somebody what it means to "pick up after yourself" Talk about how you can do it ... and how it helps others.</p> 	<p>Yom Kippur begins at sundown.</p> 	<p>Fingerpaint on cookie sheets with puffs of shaving cream.</p>	<p>Count four things: 4 eggs 4 windows 4 noses 4 buildings</p>	<p>Send a letter to yourself. Count the number of days before it arrives.</p> 	<p>Take a bag of freshly popped popcorn, add some parmesan cheese, taco seasoning or cinnamon sugar, shake and eat!</p>
<p>1</p> <p>Rosh Hashanan ends</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Make a mark in this space for every day it rains this month.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>What would you do if the electricity went off?</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>National Taco Day. Make one. Eat one.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Count your toys as you put them away.</p> 		
<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Play catch with small paper cups and ping pong balls.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Columbus Day</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>How many different berries can you name? Find out if a tomato is a berry.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>A riddle: I chirp. I fly. I sit in trees. What am I? Really?</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Go for a walk in the woods and collect some pine cones.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Draw a picture of a giraffe.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>How many different ways can you think of crossing a room? (Some examples: Like a worm? Like a fly? A planet?)</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Muffins for breakfast!</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Play with a shape sorter. Learn the names of the different shapes and say them as you drop in the shape.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Put stickers on everybody's fingertips and have a puppet show!</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Find four toys that have wheels. Count all the wheels.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Everyone name their favorite color. PURPLE !</p>	<p>25</p> <p>A joke: "Knock. Knock." "Who's there?" "Amos." "Amos who?" "A mos-quito bit me."</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Play with a ball outside. Practice rolling, throwing and kicking it.</p> 
<p>27</p> <p>Make a train out of cardboard boxes.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Draw different pumpkin faces on a piece of paper.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>National Cat Day.</p> 	<p>30</p> <p>Halloween!</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>Girl Scout Founders Day</p>	<p>Pumpkin Sandwich Puzzle</p> <p>Cut a pumpkin face out of a slice of bread. Put a slice of cheese under that piece of bread. Then add another regular piece of bread for the underneath side.</p> <p>Voila! Pumpkin sandwich!</p>	