

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2021

Gregory - Portland ISD

## KID BITS



### Win some, lose some

Before you play a family board game, remind your child that only one person or team will win. Then, brainstorm ways to be a good sport whether you win or lose. For example, she might fist-bump opponents or say, "Good game, everyone!"

### "I'm bored"

A healthy dose of boredom now and then boosts your youngster's creativity. Instead of rushing to entertain him, encourage him to find ways to amuse himself. *Tip:* Together, make a poster with pictures of things he likes to do. Hang it up where he can check it for ideas when he's bored.

### Learning about time

Help your child develop a sense of time as she goes through her daily routine. At home, you might say, "It's 12:00. Let's fix lunch now." In the car, you could tell her, "We'll be home in 15 minutes. That's about how long it takes to read a story."

### Worth quoting

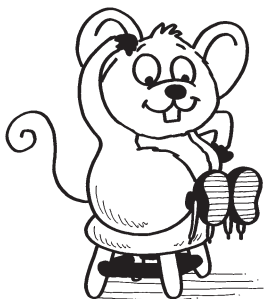
"To see the summer sky is poetry."  
*Emily Dickinson*

### Just for fun

**Mason:** These shoes don't fit!

**Mom:** You put them on the wrong feet.

**Mason:** These are the only feet I've got!



## A wonder-full summer

Caleb learned his ABCs in school this year. Abigail learned to count to 10. And Darnell learned to do science experiments. How can parents help their children remember what they learned—and learn even more—this summer? Try these activities.

### Start a curiosity box

Fill a shoebox with items that will spark your youngster's curiosity. *Examples:* flashlight, mirror, calculator, magnifying glass, kaleidoscope. Then, encourage him to explore! He might make a rainbow using the flashlight and mirror, type numbers into the calculator, or examine insects under a magnifying glass. *Tip:* Swap out items regularly to keep him interested.

### Make weekly postcards

Let your youngster record an "adventure of the week" on postcards to family members. Have him draw a picture on the blank side of an index card. Then, help him write on the left half of the lined side. Add an address and a stamp.



He might send one postcard to Grandma about learning to ride a scooter and another to his uncle about seeing a fire engine zoom down your street.

### Take imaginary trips

Visit pretend versions of your child's favorite places. Is he a fan of the aquarium? Read books to learn about sea creature habitats, and let him set up a stuffed animal aquarium. If he loves going to the car wash, he might turn on the sprinkler and wash bikes and other outdoor toys. ♥

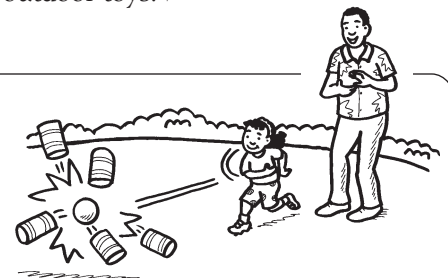
## Backyard carnival

Old-fashioned carnival games sharpen your child's hand-eye coordination. Play these versions in the backyard or at a park for some family fun.

● **Water balloon toss.** Help your youngster fill balloons with water and tie them off. Players try to land the balloons in a bucket.

● **Topple the pyramid.** Let your child build a pyramid of empty cans from the recycling bin. Take turns throwing a tennis ball at them to knock them down.

● **Frisbee throw.** Hang a hula-hoop from a tree branch. Family members can toss a Frisbee (or a ball) through the hoop. ♥



## Everyday wordplay

The more words your child hears and understands, the more ready she'll be to read and write. Try these activities to build her vocabulary.

**Connect words.** Say any random word (*zebra*), and ask your child to say a related word and explain the connection. ("Stripes, because zebras have stripes.") Now you say a word related to *stripes*—perhaps one you think your youngster doesn't know.



("Referee, because referees wear stripes.") Keep going for as long as possible—then pick a new word, and play again!

**Clap syllables.** Have your child point out long words in books and magazines or on signs. Read them together, and clap for each syllable (*spec-tac-u-lar*). Then, tell your youngster what the word means, or look it up in a dictionary together. ("*Spectacular* means really awesome. The restaurant is advertising its *spectacular* ice cream sundae.")

**Solve riddles.** Secretly pretend to be something that's related to summer, such as lemonade. Give your child hints to discover your identity, making sure to include new words. ("I am a sweet yellow beverage. I'm made from a citrus fruit. What am I?") Once she figures out what you are, she can choose a "secret identity" and describe herself.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Have a ball!

When your child plays with a ball, he's playing with science, too. Suggest these ideas to help him experiment with force and motion.

### Friction

Ask him to try rolling a ball on different surfaces (pavement, grass, sand). Which surface allows the ball to roll fastest? (A smoother surface like pavement creates less friction with the ball than a rougher or bumpier one like grass or sand.)



### Force

Have your youngster gently bounce a ball against a wall so that it bounces back to him. Now have him bounce it a little harder, and then as hard as he can. What does he notice? (The more force he uses, the more forcefully it bounces back.)

### Energy

Let your child roll a ball into a toy car to make it move. (The ball transfers some of its energy to the car, making it roll, too.)♥



## Growing more independent

Some children want to do everything by themselves. Others want help when they don't need it. Ask yourself these questions to strike a balance and foster your youngster's independence.

**1. Is it safe?** Slicing a banana with a butter knife? Yes. Cutting his meat for dinner? Probably not. You know your child best. If he wants to do something that you feel is safe, let him try.

**2. Am I on "autopilot"?** Before helping your youngster out of habit, pause to consider whether he could take over. Can he zip his jacket by himself? Shampoo his hair without assistance? Encourage him to do as much as possible for himself.

**3. Could I make a suggestion?** When your child struggles, offer advice instead of a rescue. ("Your tent might stay up better if you find a way to anchor it to the chair.")♥



## Q & A Work out worries through play

**Q:** My daughter sometimes acts out scary scenarios when she plays, like getting COVID or taking cover during a tornado. What should I do?

**A:** It's perfectly normal for children to use pretend play to handle scary things. Because your child is in charge of what happens when she plays, she feels like she has some control over a worrisome situation.

You can offer reassurance by having age-appropriate conversations about

her fears. For instance, explain to your daughter that children don't usually get very sick with COVID. Also, work together to make a plan for scenarios that concern her. For storms, she might put special snacks and toys in a basket to keep in a spot where you would shelter.

**Note:** If your daughter shows signs of stress, like stomachaches or changes in eating or sleeping habits, talk to her pediatrician.♥



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To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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# Home & School

## CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

May 2021

Gregory - Portland ISD



### SHORT NOTES

#### Teacher appreciation

This year has been tough for teachers and students alike. Suggest that your youngster end it on a nice note by making a short appreciation video for her teacher. Film your child saying thanks for something specific (“Thank you for teaching us fun word games”) and demonstrating something she learned, like how to make a baking soda-and-vinegar “volcano.”

#### Time for poetry

Poetry offers short bursts of reading practice and can help your youngster develop a love of language. Check out a few volumes of children’s poetry from the library this summer. Keep the books in the car, on the coffee table, and anywhere else he could pick them up to read a few verses.

#### Checkup reminder

Now is a good time to schedule your child’s back-to-school checkup—especially if she missed this year’s exam due to the pandemic. Her doctor will do important vision and hearing screenings and catch her up on any vaccinations she needs to stay healthy.

#### Worth quoting

“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.”  
*Albert Schweitzer*

### JUST FOR FUN

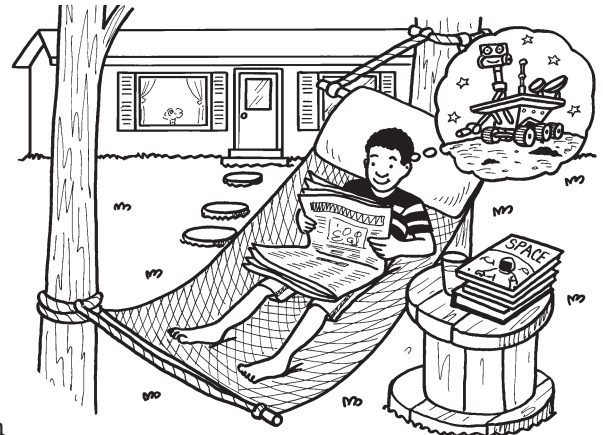
**Q:** What do you call a snowman in May?

**A:** A puddle!



## Summer brain workouts

Keeping your youngster’s brain active during the summer months helps him remember what he learned in school—and keeps the learning going. That’s especially important this year due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Make summertime fun and educational with these strategies.



#### Follow the news

Give your youngster a reason to read and write all summer by having him follow news about a topic that interests him. If he is fascinated by outer space, he might read articles about Mars exploration and space tourism. If he loves animals, he could find news about babies born at the zoo. He can write weekly “news briefs” to summarize major stories and read them aloud to you.

#### Play car games

Use time spent in the car to play math games. Call out a target number (say, 11), and race to find a sign with numbers that add up to 11. Your child

might choose a sign for Route 317, because  $3 + 1 + 7 = 11$ . Or work together to find a pattern of odd and even numbers (65 mph on a speed limit sign, \$108 on a hotel billboard). How long can you keep the pattern going?

#### Learn together

It’s easier to keep your child learning if you join him. Aim to learn something new together each week, perhaps how to build model cars, play different versions of solitaire or dominos, make your own candles, or write simple computer programs. ♥

### Family spirit week

Your child has likely celebrated spirit week at school—why not hold a spirit week at home? It will build her sense of family pride and belonging. Try these ideas.

● **Choose a family mascot.** Is your family busy as a bee? Brave as a lion? Have your youngster draw your mascot and write a motto. (“We are the Busy Bees. We get things done!”)

● **Plan special days.** On Baseball Day, each person can wear her favorite team’s colors while everyone plays a friendly backyard ball game. On Heritage Day, eat foods from countries your ancestors are from. *Idea:* Ask other relatives to participate. Swap photos or hold video chats to see each other’s spirit week adventures. ♥





## Ways to show respect

Respect means caring how your words and actions affect others. Use these tips to guide your child to be respectful of:

**Others.** Explore the saying, “Treat people how you want to be treated.” Let your youngster draw or list different ways people have treated her respectfully. *Examples:* Her brother asked permission before borrowing her crayons. Her cousin put away his video game to spend time with her. Then, have her look for opportunities to show respect to others.



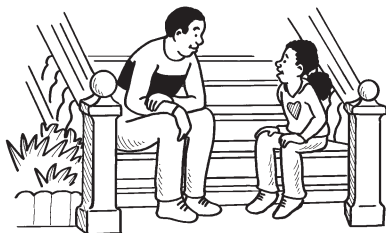
**Property.** Ask your child to make “care labels” with instructions for taking care of belongings. She might choose a basket to hold library books and make a sticky note label that reads “Handle gently. Return by the due date.”

**Authority.** Talk with your youngster about why we follow rules and laws (to stay safe and be fair). Then, take turns naming a rule or law and a result of ignoring it. For instance, if everyone ignored the “No talking in class” rule, no one would be able to hear the teacher and learn.♥

## Q & A Making decisions

**Q:** Now that my daughter is older, she gets angry when I try to help her make decisions. How can I guide her and still keep the peace?

**A:** It's tempting as a parent to speak up when you think your child is making a poor choice. But experiencing consequences is how kids learn to make better decisions. If your daughter's choices won't cause harm, let her make some mistakes.



Rather than volunteering advice, ask questions. If she's thinking of breaking a promise to a friend, you might ask, “How do you think your friend will feel?”

Finally, if her choice turns out badly, avoid saying, “I told you so.” Instead, help her brainstorm ways to do better in the future. If her friend gets mad at her for breaking her promise, you might say, “What would you do differently next time?”♥

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## PARENT TO PARENT

### My nature center

My son Will looks forward to springtime visits to our local nature center. This year, the indoor exhibits are closed, so I suggested that he create his own nature center at home.

Will loved the idea. He made rubbings of bark from trees, collected flowers and leaves from the ground, and drew pictures of plants and animals he spotted. Together, we checked out field guides from the library to identify his findings. He used what he learned to make an informational “plaque” for each item, just like in the real nature center.

Then Will set up his exhibits in a corner of the family room. He added books about nature as well as a few “wild” stuffed animals, like a squirrel and a cardinal. When he was satisfied with his nature center, he gave our family a tour.

Will continues to add new discoveries—and he's looking forward to showing relatives and friends around his nature center via video chat.♥



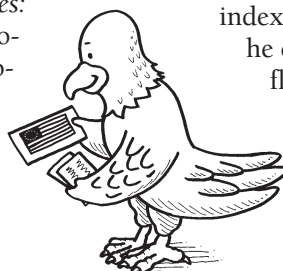
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Holiday history

Use summer holidays as a jumping-off point to explore history with your youngster.

#### Memorial Day

Go online together and learn about national war memorials. *Examples:* the National World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the National Memorial Arch. Some even have virtual tours. Then invite your child to make models of the memorials using play dough or materials from the recycling bin.



#### Independence Day

Fun fact: Since 1776, there have been 27 different versions of the U.S. flag. Have your youngster research them in library books. He can draw each flag on the plain side of an index card. On the lined side, he could write the date the flag was introduced and other facts about it. Let him punch holes in the cards and thread them on a piece of yarn to display them in order by date.♥

# Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

May 2021

Gregory - Portland ISD

## INFO BITS



### Fold to make shapes

Have your child fold a piece of paper several times in different directions, open it, and lay it flat. Ask her to color the shapes created by the fold lines. Which shapes did she make? Can she fold another piece of paper so all the shapes are triangles? Squares? She'll need to think logically about how shapes are related.



### Patterns of motion

Encourage your youngster to look for patterns of motion everywhere he goes. At the playground, he could swing back and forth. On the beach, he might watch waves go in and out. Together, think of more patterns, like sunrise and sunset or a basketball bouncing up and down. Now have him draw what those patterns of motion look like.

### Book picks

📖 Your child will realize how important—and fun—math really is when she reads *The Great Number Rumble: A Story of Math in Surprising Places* (Cora Lee).

📖 *Mr. Ferris and His Wheel* (Kathryn Gibbs Davis) tells the true story of the American engineer who invented the popular carnival ride.

### Just for fun



**Q:** Which stars wear sunglasses?

**A:** Movie stars!

## Summer math camp

Bring summer camp home with these cool ideas that will inspire your child to practice multiplication, division, and fractions.

### Multiplication hikes

Let your youngster collect natural objects like rocks or shells—and see how they “multiply”! To display his treasures, he could arrange them in equal groups. He might make 5 groups of 6 shells each or 3 groups of 8 rocks each, then say the multiplication problems he sees ( $5 \times 6 = 30$  or  $6 \times 5 = 30$ ,  $3 \times 8 = 24$  or  $8 \times 3 = 24$ ).



### Division tag

After dark, play this version of flashlight tag. Have your child number a dozen sheets of paper 1–12 and tape each to something in the yard (tree, chair). Now ask him to list 20 division problems, each with an answer between 1 and 12. One player calls out a problem while another runs to “tag” the answer with a flashlight. If he's right, he gets another problem. If not, he gives a problem to the next player.

### Poolside fractions

Help your youngster measure and cut a pool noodle into fractional pieces: one 12-inch, two 6-inch, three 4-inch, four 3-inch, and six 2-inch. Then, have him use a marker to write “1” on the biggest piece. He can figure out which fraction ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , or  $\frac{1}{6}$ ) to label the others by comparing them to 1. Take turns stacking smaller pieces and adding the fractions. *Example:*  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} = \frac{3}{4}$ . Check your answers against the “1” piece to see if you're right. 📦

## Discover plant parts

What's in a salad? Leaves, roots, stems, seeds, flowers, and fruits! With this activity, your youngster can learn about the parts of plants she eats.

When you bring home groceries, have her get a notebook and label a page for each of those plant parts. Then, she could look closely at fruits and vegetables to decide which part they are and list them on the correct page. *Examples:* spinach (leaves), carrots (roots), asparagus (stems), peas (seeds), broccoli (flowers), and apples (fruit).

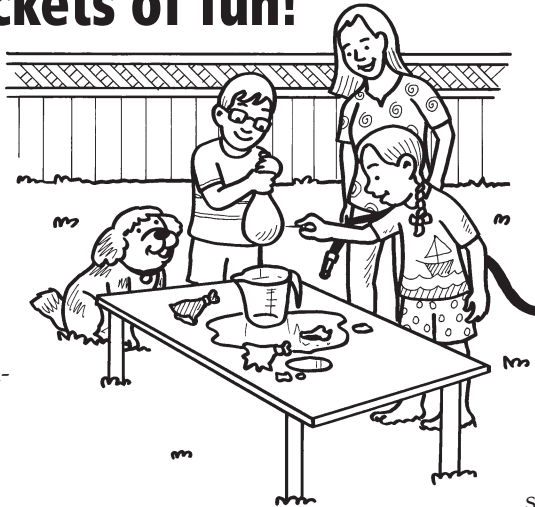
Finally, let your child use the produce to make her own healthy salad. 📦




# Liquid volume: Buckets of fun!

Water balloons and sandcastles say “summer.” Here’s how your child can use them to measure liquid volume.

**Water balloons.** Compete to create the largest water balloon. Take turns stretching a balloon around a faucet and turning on the water. The object is to get the balloon as big as possible without bursting it. Now each person should use a pin to carefully pop her balloon over a large measuring cup. On a



sheet of paper, your youngster could record each measurement—and announce the winner!

**Sandcastle.** Can your child discover the ideal “recipe” for building a sandcastle? Have her fill a bucket with sand, using a measuring cup to keep track of how much the bucket holds. Then, she should slowly pour in water from a measuring cup and record how much she adds before water pools on top of the sand. Finally, she can turn the bucket over and lift it up. Does her castle hold together? If not, she could repeat the activity, using more or less water. 


## Q & A My math station

**Q:** With summer about to start, how can I keep my son excited about math and practicing the skills he’s learned this year?

**A:** Help your child set up a math station on a table or in a large cardboard box turned on its side. Together, stock it with tools and games that make math fun.



For instance, include a ruler, a calculator, pencils, regular paper and graph paper, and a protractor. He might make graphs to display, use the protractor to create abstract art with different angles, and create a “problem of the day” for family members to solve.

Also, get your son math- or logic-related games to put in his station. You can find these at yard sales and thrift stores, or ask for hand-me-downs from relatives. Examples include Yahtzee, Sequence, Set, Mancala, and Monopoly. 

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## MATH CORNER

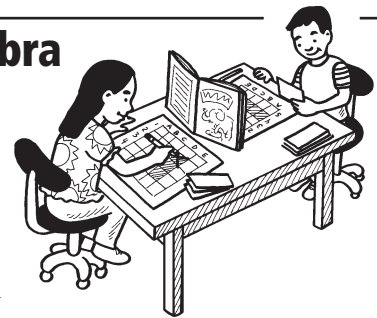
### Sunken-ship algebra

This graph-paper version of Battleship introduces your youngster to algebra as she solves for  $x$  to sink your “ships.”

**Set up:** Have each player draw a  $5 \times 5$  grid with columns labeled A–E and rows numbered 1–5. Set up a divider (perhaps a book standing up) so players can’t see each other’s boards. Now each person makes a “ship” by secretly shading in a line of three squares (vertical or horizontal). On separate index cards, let your child write six equations, each with a missing number (examples:  $56 + x = 86$ ,  $x - 12 = 10$ ), and stack them facedown.

**Play:** Take turns calling out coordinates. If your youngster says “A, 5,” and part of your ship is in column A, row 5, she gets an equation card. If she solves it correctly, she “sinks” that part of your ship, and you cross it out. If your ship isn’t in the coordinates she chose or she gets an equation wrong, her turn ends.

**Win:** Be the first to sink your opponent’s entire ship. 



## SCIENCE LAB


### “Why is the sky blue?”

Since your child was little, he has probably asked you why the sky is blue. This experiment will help him discover the reason on his own.

**You’ll need:** tall (clear) jar or glass, water,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. measure, milk, spoon, flashlight

**Here’s how:** Have your youngster fill the jar about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with water, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. milk, and stir. Then, as he shines the flashlight straight down into the liquid, he can look through the side of the jar and observe the color.

**What happens?** The water appears blue.

**Why?** When the flashlight beam bounces off the milk particles, blue is reflected. On Earth, sunlight shines through our atmosphere and bounces off particles of air and dust. Again, blue is the color most likely to be reflected and to scatter around—making our sky look blue. In outer space, there is no air and little dust to bounce off of, so it’s dark. 





# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

May 2021

Gregory - Portland Independent School District

## Book Picks



### ■ Gabby Garcia's Ultimate Playbook (Iva-Marie Palmer)

Gabby is a star baseball player and a popular student at her middle school. When she suddenly has to move and change schools, she tries to stick to her “play-book” for success but realizes she might have to change her plans. The first book in the Gabby Garcia series.



### ■ National Parks of the U.S.A. (Kate Siber)

From Death Valley to Acadia, explore 21 national parks with one book. Readers will find beautiful illustrations and learn about the parks’ diverse landscapes. Includes maps, facts about plants and wildlife, and information on how to protect our parks.



### ■ Tap Dancing on the Roof: Sijo (Poems) (Linda Sue Park)

Learn about sijo, a traditional type of poetry from Korea. Sijo usually has a funny twist at the end that makes readers think. This book has poems with topics ranging from breakfast to long division. After reading them, your youngster might be inspired to write a few sijo of his own.

### ■ The World According to Humphrey (Betty G. Birney)

Being the class pet is a big job for little Humphrey. The hamster helps a shy girl speak up, finds friends for a lonely janitor, and has his own notebook. Then the regular teacher returns, and she hates hamsters. Can Humphrey win her over? Book one of the Humphrey series. (Also available in Spanish.)



## A summer full of books

“I’m going to read that book next!” If your child has a list of books she wants to try, she’s more likely to read regularly this summer. Suggest these ideas to help her find books that appeal to her, and then she can check them out from the library.



### Armchair travels

Your youngster might not tour the canals of Venice or go to an Antarctic research station this summer, but she could read her way through those places! Encourage her to choose books about locations she studied in school or wants to visit. She might read a novel set in Italy or a nonfiction book about the South Pole. She’ll explore places, people, and events around the world.

### Book trailers

Help your child find book trailers online—they’re like movie trailers, but for books. She can type “book trailers for kids” into a search engine. She’ll get a taste of what a book is about and decide whether to put it on her to-read list. *Idea:* She could make her own trailers for books she enjoys and share them with friends.

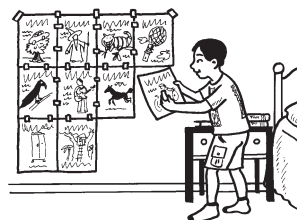
### Showtime!

Let your youngster look for movies based on books. She can pick ones she’d like to watch and add the book titles to her summer reading list. After she reads the book and watches the movie, have her tell you how the two versions were similar and different. Which one did she like better, and why? ■

## Track summer reading

Let your youngster see for himself how many books he can read while school is out. Share these clever ways for keeping track.

● **Make a quilt.** As he finishes a book, suggest that he draw a picture showing his favorite part. He can tape the pages together and hang his growing “quilt” on his bedroom wall.



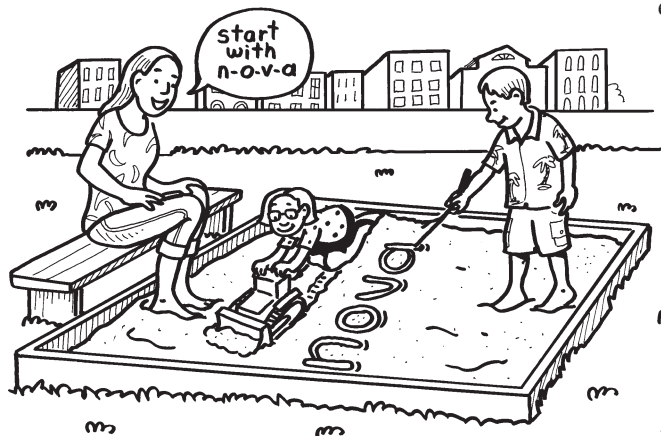
● **Create a passport.** Have your child use a small notebook as a reading passport. He could draw a “stamp” and write a short book review on each page.

● **Craft a paper chain.** Encourage him to write the title and author of each book on a strip of paper, loop the strips together, and snake the chain around his room. ■

## Play listening games

Whether your child is participating in a class discussion or you're telling him how to do a chore at home, he needs good listening skills. Practice with these silly games.

**Unusual instructions.** The object of the game is to spell a word using specific directions. Secretly choose a word, such as *novel*. While your youngster listens closely, give him fun instructions for spelling the word. For example, "Start with *nova*. Then, change *a* to *e* and add *l* to the



end." When he gets the right word, it's his turn to think of a word and give you directions.

**Forbidden word.** In this game, family members must listen carefully to catch each other using a "forbidden word." Ask your child to choose a word that might be hard to avoid, such as *eat* or *play*.

The first person caught using it has to attach a safety pin to his shirt. If he catches someone else, he transfers the pin to that person. ■

### Parent 2 Parent

#### TV writing

My daughter Jessie always wants to watch her favorite cartoon. One day when she'd had enough screen time, I suggested she try writing her own cartoon episode.

She considered several different story lines for the characters. After picking her favorite, Jessie started writing about a little platypus who went on a mission to save the world. Because she knows the show so well, it was easy for her to imagine how the characters would behave in a new situation.



To fill out her plot and add details, Jessie decided to make a storyboard. She drew each scene and glued them in order on poster board. She is proud of her original cartoon episode, and now she and her siblings are practicing a skit version to put on for us! ■

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## Thank-you notes for teachers

After the challenges of this school year, it's extra important to show appreciation for teachers. Help your child write a thank-you note with these three steps.

1. He can begin with an explanation of why he's writing: "Dear Mr. Redding, I want to thank you for all the help you gave me this school year."
2. Next, have your youngster write a few sentences telling why he is grateful. *Example:* "You made virtual learning interesting and made us feel like we were together in the classroom."
3. Finally, suggest that he sum up his thanks and wish his teacher a good summer: "Again, thank you for everything. I hope you have a nice summer." He could close with "Gratefully" or "Sincerely," followed by his signature. *Tip:* He can deliver his notes by mail or email. ■



### Fun with Words

## Match the rhyming pairs

A "Hink Pink" is a two-word phrase that hints at a pair of rhyming words. For instance, "insect snuggle" can be a "bug hug." Use this fun activity to build your child's vocabulary.

Together, write a dozen Hink Pinks and answers on separate slips of paper. To come up with them, you might pick something in the room or out the car window (a cup) and think of a word that

rhymes with it (pup). Then, look in a dictionary or thesaurus to find a synonym for each word ("pup cup" = "canine chalice").

Mix up the pairs, and arrange them facedown in even rows and columns.

Take turns flipping over two slips and reading them aloud.

If they match ("big rig" and "enormous truck"), keep them. If not, turn them back over. The person who gets the most matches wins the game. ■

