



Learning in Families Together: Pre-schoolers

Being able to wait their turn, not throwing a difficult puzzle across the room in frustration, and staying in bed at night are all behaviors that children must learn.

Karen DeBord, Virginia Cooperative Extension Specialist, Family and Human Development; Reviewed by Crystal Tyler-Mackey, Extension Specialist, Community viability, Virginia Tech



Parenting Secrets

- By age 2, children are almost half as tall as they will be as adults.
- As they learn to talk, preschool children learn to name objects before they combine words and before they can make decisions with playmates.
- Children ages 2 to 3 are learning to explore and be separate from their parents. Give them a safe space to explore.
- Childproofing makes a parent's job easier and children safer!

Together Time

Develop routines.

- Mornings can be stressful and evenings are not relaxing if you don't have a routine. Think it through, start a routine, and stick to it. Children feel safe when they know what is coming next and learn how to behave within these limits.

Play Time

Play is a child's work and learning how to play is essential.

- Common household items such as measuring cups, boxes, spoons, and junk mail are often all that is needed. Think about using sorting, naming, and grouping activities.

Learning Time

Developing a sense of self-control seems slow to develop. Behaviors such as whining in checkout lines, physical outbursts against siblings, and an inability to sit still when waiting are examples of loss of control.

- Prepare the child before entering a store. Have hand toys ready to keep their hands busy. Allow them to hold the broccoli or look for colors you name.

- Avoid taking a tired or hungry child shopping. Your trip will be miserable.
- Sometimes, buying a treat but not buying one another time is the strongest reinforcement of "asking" versus "whining." Be consistent.
- Tell the child before entering a store what behavior is expected. Don't threaten to leave when they exhibit poor behavior. Just leave. Restate your expectations then calmly leave. The next time, remind them what you expect and try again.