

**Discussion points**

- Brain development supporting emerging reading
- Laying literacy foundations
- Language development and emerging reading skills
- The social process of early literacy development
- Parenting topic

**Parent educator resource**

- *Brain Development Supporting Reading*

**Parent handouts**

- *Your Child or Your Young Child, Language and Social-Emotional Development, 3, 4, or 5 Years*
- *Your Child's Brain Development and Learning to Read*
- *Developmental Stages of Reading*

**Process**

## I. Rapport-building

II. Observation. Throughout the visit, consider the *whole child* as you share specific observations related to each domain of development.

III. Discussion. Incorporate throughout the visit.

A. **Review** your previous visit using the Personal Visit Record. Ask parents what they noticed as they practiced the parent follow-up activity(s).

B. **Parent comments and concerns.** Invite parents to share, now and throughout the visit.



C. **Developmental characteristics.** Use the handouts, *Language and Social-Emotional Development*, that are appropriate for the child's age. Ask which of these characteristics parents may be observing already. After the visit, record observations on the form, *Milestones: 3, 4, or 5 Years*.



D. **Brain development supporting emerging reading.** Use the handout, *Your Child's Brain Development and Learning to Read*, to discuss. (Refer to the resource, *Brain Development Supporting Reading*, for supporting information.) Certain changes in the brain that take place during the preschool years contribute to children's reading readiness.

1. During the preschool years, children's brains develop increased speed, memory capacity, and attention span.
2. The brain circuits underlying language become more mature.
3. The myelination of the corpus callosum (the bridge between the two hemispheres of the brain) contributes to better communication between the right hemisphere (used to read sight words) and the left (used in the understanding of phonics).



E. **Laying literacy foundations.** Use the handout, *Developmental Stages of Reading*, to discuss how children learn to read.

1. Reading and writing are processes that develop simultaneously almost from birth and continue over time with each print experience the child has.

2. Preschoolers who are read to frequently can learn that adults are reading the print in books, that there's a right way to hold a book (right-side-up), and that pages are turned from left to right.
3. They may realize that a set of symbols called letters composes words and that these words are separated by white spaces.
4. Parents who read to their children are helping to instill a love of books and a desire to read.
5. When children see their parents read for many purposes (including pleasure) they learn to value literacy.

**F. Language development and emerging reading skills**

1. Research shows that language skills, especially those that concern awareness and production of speech sounds, are central to a child's reading competency.
2. A child's strong oral vocabulary is an asset in reading fluently. He can recognize a word in print more quickly if it is already a part of his oral vocabulary.
3. Reading is essentially a language skill; the language centers in the brain are less active in poor readers than in fluent readers.

**G. The social process of early literacy development**

1. Children learn about language in all its forms by observing their environment and interacting with the people in their daily life.
2. They begin to understand that both spoken and written language are tools for communication and learning.
3. Social interactions during the preschool years encourage strong speaking and listening skills.
4. Parent-child interactions, such as nightly bedtime stories, reading birthday cards together, looking for the sign of a favorite restaurant, and reading menus together, help young children develop an understanding of print.
5. Reading together encourages a relationship of mutual trust and respect between a child and an adult.
6. When parents notice and encourage a child's emerging reading skills, the child is motivated to continue practicing his skills.



- H. Parenting topic.** Choose a topic from the Parenting Topics section of the guide based on the family's need. Use the parent handout to discuss the topic with the parents. If appropriate, include the child in the discussion.

**IV. Parent-child activity: Emerging Reading Skills**

**A. Materials**

- Materials to make a book (file folder, paper, brads, hole punch or stapler, pencils, markers, crayons)
- Glue stick
- Toy catalog, pictures of toys cut from magazines or advertisements from toy stores
- Front of a popular cereal box
- Scissors
- Children's book about going on a walk, signs, or other examples of print used in everyday life

**B. Rationale.** Tell parents why this activity is important.

1. Young children learn best when they are actively involved in experiences which make the information meaningful to them.
2. Children need regular and active interactions with print in order to learn to read.
3. Enjoyable experiences with print that illustrate its importance in daily life motivate children to want to learn to read.

### C. Parent-child interaction

1. Emerging Reading Skills
  - a. Tell the child and parent that you are going to take a “reading” walk around the room (or house, with the parent’s permission), and then write a book called *We Went Walking*.
  - b. Walk around the house with the child and parent, looking for places where print is used (books, magazines, grocery lists, instructions, labels, etc.).
  - c. As the child points out print examples, ask the parent to write them down.
  - d. After the walk, sit down with the parent and child. Tell the parent to write the words *We Went Walking* on the front of the file folder to make the cover of the book.
  - e. Ask the parent to read the first print example on the list aloud and to copy it onto a piece of paper. This will be the first page of the book. Ask the child to “write” the same words under what the parent has written and let him scribble what he sees. He may also want to illustrate the page with a picture.
  - f. Ask the parent and child to continue making the book. When they have finished, assemble the book and attach the pages together inside the cover using the brads, stapler, yarn, masking tape, or other materials.
  - g. Tell the parent to read the book aloud. With the child, follow the path designated in the book and point out the print examples. Then take a turn reading the book while the parent and child follow the path.
2. Book sharing/Literacy experience
  - a. Give the book to the child and ask him to have the parent read it.
  - b. Help the parent notice how the child responds after having an experience related to the book.
  - c. If the child requests, have the parent reread the book or give the book to the child to look at.
3. Parent follow-up. Ask the parents to do the following during the between visits.
  - a. Reread the book periodically and ask the child or other family member to follow the path.
  - b. Make an effort to point out print examples everyday—signs, labels, logos—so the child can see the value of literacy.
  - c. Read, read, read to the child everyday, and let child see the parent reading for pleasure and information.

### D. Shared observation. Help the parents observe their child’s play and consider these questions.

1. Did the child seem to understand the idea of print examples? How did he show this? Can the parent think why he might have chosen this?
2. Did he find any examples of print on his own? What were they?
3. Did he do any scribbling or form any letters? What did he say about his scribbling?
4. Did he follow the path that the parent described while reading the book?
5. A developmental sequence for language development parents may observe is:
  - a. *Level 1.* The child “reads” familiar words and signs in his environment (McDonald’s, Cheerios, stop signs, etc.). He holds books correctly and turns pages beginning at the front of the book. He pretends to write notes or lists and to read them back. He shows an interest in print and letters, perhaps asking, “What does that say?”
  - b. *Level 2.* The child can identify his own name in print. He enjoys listening to a variety of books and can retell familiar stories. He can use pretend writing during fantasy play. He is beginning to develop an understanding that the printed text (not the pictures) is what is read.

- c. *Level 3.* The child shows an interest in the printed word in books and in the environment, pointing out letters, numbers, and symbols that he recognizes. He is beginning to use letters randomly in his scribbled writing. He looks at books by himself and may have parts of favorite books memorized. When shown an alphabet book, he can identify most of the letters and can say the sound some of them make.
- 6. A developmental sequence for social-emotional development parents may observe is:
  - a. *Level 1.* The child can respond comfortably to simple questions. He can ask for help or to have something read to him. He may need help in learning to take turns.
  - b. *Level 2.* The child can cooperate with adult requests most of the time. He has an easier time taking turns than he did when he was younger. He uses language for social interaction.
  - c. *Level 3.* The child asks serious questions and wants factual answers. He shows confidence and pride in his own accomplishments.

E. **Additional activity.** Use this activity if time remains in the visit.

- 1. Show the child the toy catalog and have him cut out pictures of his favorite toys. Point out environmental print in the catalog he might recognize. Have the parent and child make an *I Went Shopping* type of book using the child's pictures.
- 2. Tell the child to "read" the book aloud.
- 3. Show the child the cereal box front. See if he can "read" it (he may recognize a familiar cereal like "Cheerios"). Cut the front of the box into several pieces and mix them up. Tell the child to put the puzzle together and provide help if needed.

## V. Summary

- A. **Key observations.** Restate one or two key observations you have made about the child's development.
- B. **Parents' strength.** Point out a strength you observed in the parents.
- C. **Parent follow-up.** Remind parents to continue with the follow-up to the activity(s). Tell parents that you'll be eager to hear about their experiences with the follow-up activity(s) at your next visit.

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## Brain Development Supporting Reading

Reading is an important skill for success in school and in the world of work, yet many children and adults struggle to learn to read. Unlike speech, which is instinctive to humans, reading is not a natural mental ability. Written language is simply too new an historical invention to have exerted any significant adaptive pressure on the evolution of the human brain. So, while nearly every child learns to speak without any obvious effort, learning to read takes work.

At least 10% of all children have great difficulty with one or more of the steps involved in decoding written symbols into sounds, words, and meaning. Most of the children who have been identified by schools as having a learning disability have problems learning to read. One prominent research group at Yale University has estimated that 17 to 20% of the school population has significant reading impairment, and this deficit continues to follow people throughout life. According to the International Dyslexia Association, people in the United States who are illiterate represent 75% of the unemployed and 60% of prison inmates.

When a child is struggling to learn to read, a parent's immediate concern is the unhappiness and frustration that the child experiences daily. Parents and the rest of the family at home are deeply affected by a child's reading problem. Why do some children seem to struggle, while others learn to read easily? There is no evidence that a child's intelligence (as long as it is within normal range) impacts the ease of learning to read.

Many studies conducted over several decades have yielded a fairly complete outline of the psychological and linguistic competencies that characterize a successful reader. Again and again, the results of well-designed research have shown that *language skills*, especially those that have to do with awareness and production of speech sounds, are central to reading competence. Reading does depend on specific language abilities, many of which can be learned.

### Changes in the brain during preschool years

Scientists have been studying the parts of the brain that are used in reading. There are certain changes in the brain that take place during the 3-year to kindergarten entry age range which contribute to children's reading readiness: increased neural speed, memory capacity, attention span, and basic maturation of the brain circuits that underly language.

These abilities depend on sophisticated neural machinery, most of which is located in the left hemisphere of the cerebral cortex. Neuroscientists believe that the left hemisphere is innately biased for language, but that events during the first years of life determine just how well the language apparatus gets "wired" there. One recent study found that early grade schoolers' *phonemic awareness*—the ability to separate the individual sounds of speech—corresponded to the size of a language area of the brain known as the *planum temporale* (a thick triangle at the border of the temporal and parietal lobes).

Of course, it is not known which are the cause and effect here. Does phonemic awareness, an important stepping stone to reading, affect the size of this left hemisphere structure or do inherent differences in children's brains determine who will read early vs. late? The influence probably goes both ways. But it does seem likely that children who are exposed earlier and more often to written material will begin making the connection between letters and sounds earlier than children who do not receive as rich a literacy experience.

### Experience matters

Studies with twins have shown that verbal ability is roughly 50% due to heredity, while only about 20% of differences in abilities in scholastic skills like reading and spelling can be attributed to genes.

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In other words, a child's experience plays a larger role in his reading ability than in language acquisition.

Even children with excellent verbal skills do not necessarily learn to read easily. Learning to read involves substantially different processes than learning to speak. Before a child can read the words on the page he needs to have an adequate understanding of letter-sound correspondence. For the majority of children, the process of connecting a speech sound to each letter takes some effort, and for many, explicit training and practice.

However, once the child receives training in linking speech sounds to letters, his strong oral vocabulary is an asset in reading fluently. A child can recognize a word in print more quickly if it is already part of his oral vocabulary. About half of total reading comprehension ability depends on knowing individual word meanings.

#### **Language centers in the brain are less active in poor readers**

Learning to read and learning to speak involve different brain circuits that are specialized for each function. These circuits overlap but are not identical. With the advent of non-invasive brain scanning techniques, scientists can now watch the brain activity of a person who is reading. These techniques enable experts to understand which areas of the brain are activated while reading. In this research, a person inside a MRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) machine is asked to repeat words, determine which two out of three words rhyme, or read a passage. The researcher can then see the bright red areas of activation that signal which areas of the brain are working while completing each task.

Even with brain scanning, no one can tell exactly *what* the brain is doing in order to be able to read—just which parts of the brain are activated during a task. It is clear, however, that the language centers of the brain, in the middle on the left side, are less active in poor readers, and that reading is essentially a language skill.

In addition to eye movement and brain activation studies, researchers have compared skilled and unskilled readers and drawn conclusions about what they do differently. Research with preschoolers and kindergartners shows that children who test low in several areas are at risk for reading failure. These include:

- Speech sound (phoneme) awareness
- Knowledge of letters
- Speed in naming series of objects, colors, numbers, and letters
- Vocabulary
- Familiarity with print

Children who receive remedial instruction in these areas are more likely to succeed. Before a child can benefit from reading instruction, some key skills must be in place. Three skills (which are affected by how much a child has been read to) appear to be more critical than all others:

- Awareness about print and how a book is read
- Knowledge of the names of the letters
- Awareness of the speech sounds in words (phonemic awareness)

Some children come to school reading fluently without formal reading instruction. A common factor in the lives of these children is that they were read to regularly. Preschoolers who are read to frequently can learn before kindergarten that adults are reading the print in books (not just the pictures), that there's a right-side-up-way to hold a book, and that pages are turned from left to right. They may also realize that the set of symbols called letters compose words which are separated by white spaces. They may even realize that words come in many lengths and that often the words that take the longest to say are the longest in print.

Many children can identify and name the majority of the letters of the alphabet by the time they enter school. The process of learning the alphabet usually begins at home when the child is taught to sing the alphabet song. This is a great first step because, through repeated singing of the song, the child knows the names of the letters before trying to attach visual representations to them. Experts

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have concluded that a child who cannot recognize and name letters will be seriously impaired in learning letter sounds and recognizing words.

The third critical skill, awareness of speech sounds in words, does not develop as naturally. Yet, recent sophisticated studies with kindergartners and older poor readers have shown that phonological skill (the ability to identify, sequence, substitute, and move around the sounds in words) is the single best predictor of a child's ability to learn to read easily.

Rhymes and alliteration can help children develop phonemic awareness. Children enjoy trying to repeat tongue twisters like "Betty Botter bought a bit of bitter butter." In doing so they can become aware of the individual sounds of letters.

Parents who talk to their children a lot and encourage them to respond, and who read storybooks and nursery rhymes to them on a frequent and regular basis, are giving their children a solid foundation in the reading process.

### **References**

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# Your Child's Brain Development and Learning to Read

One of the most important skills your child can learn in order to succeed in life is reading. Think about how much reading has played a part in your own academic and work careers—and even in daily activities like driving (traffic signs) and cooking (recipes). Reading is more important today than ever before. The literacy requirements of most jobs have increased significantly with the advent of electronic mail, fax machines, and the Internet. Communications that, in the past, were made in person or on the phone are increasingly being sent in writing.

Since reading is written language, giving your child a good foundation in verbal language during his earliest years will help him learn to read. Making an effort to “bombard” him with language, using vocabulary that is a little more advanced than what he can actually say, and asking him questions that will encourage him to talk, will help improve his language skills. Reading books to him and teaching him the Alphabet Song will familiarize him with print and with the letter names of the alphabet.

Reading does not come as naturally as speech. Most children must be taught to read. At least 10% of all children have great difficulty learning to read, and it has been estimated that as much as 20% of the school population has significant reading impairment. Although your child's early elementary school teachers will give him skills to help him learn to read, you can give him a “jump start” now by beginning to prepare him.

## Brain development supports reading readiness

There are changes occurring in your child's brain during the 3-year to kindergarten entry period that contribute to his reading readiness. These include increased speed of transmissions between neurons (nerve cells), increased memory capacity, longer attention span, and basic maturation of the brain circuits supporting language. Make sure he is eating nutritious foods and getting enough sleep to fuel these physical changes. As the designer of your child's environment, you can provide enriched surroundings which enable your child to have successful learning experiences.

Three of the most important things your child needs to know before he can learn to read are:

- That printed words mean something, and that pages in books are read from top to bottom and from left to right.
- The names of the individual letters of the alphabet.
- That words are made up of individual speech sounds.

## Ways you can help

You can help your child learn these things by:

- Reading to him on a regular and frequent basis. Running your finger along the text so he can see you are reading from left to right.
- Providing magnetic, foam, or other types of letters he can hold and examine, and naming the letters for him (start with capital letters—they are easier to identify). If he doesn't know the Alphabet Song, sing it to him often to help him learn it.

- Reciting or reading nursery rhymes and other poems.
- Helping him make up words that rhyme.
- Singing and playing CDs and tapes that emphasize rhyme and alliteration (words that begin with the same sound); i.e. *This Old Man*, and *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*.
- Clapping out the number of syllables in a word.

Other ideas include:

- Taking him to the library regularly (ask the librarian for suggestions of good books, based on your child's age and interests).
- Showing him different types of print and printed materials and giving him the chance to imitate you reading. For instance, when you get mail (bills, take-out menus, cards, announcements) share some of them with your child so he will learn that they serve a purpose and so he can practice "reading".
- Showing your child lists and telephone messages you've written and explaining what they are and how they're used.
- Making writing materials (pencils, crayons, markers, chalk, paper) available to him so he has the chance to write or scribble pretend items like lists, letters, and menus by himself.
- Making a point of looking up answers to questions. For example, look up the weather forecast in the newspaper with your child to decide whether or not to bring a jacket or an umbrella with you when you leave the house.

## Children vary in their enthusiasm for reading

Some children love books, while others have little interest in them. If your child is in the latter group, you will have to make more of an effort to familiarize him with the world of print. If your child resists being read to, get creative! Make two or three letters out of masking tape on your driveway, patio, or garage door. Ask your child to bounce a ball on the "A" or the "B," or have him jump on them as you call them out; then take a turn yourself and let him call out the letters.

Talk about familiar signs as you drive or walk with your child. Praise any of his attempts to "read" ("that sign says McDonald's"). Read menus with him, food labels, or instructions to a game or toy. Let him see the value of the printed word. Encourage him to create stories. When you're driving in the car, make up a sentence to be used as the first line of a story. Let him make up the next line, then you take another turn. Later, write the story down and read it back to him.

It is important to keep reading fun and stress-free. If your child is not interested, don't give up; but try at a different time or in a different way. At the very least, let him see you reading for pleasure and information so he continues to see its value.

The job of teaching children to read has become more challenging. Children are starting school with more variation in their abilities than ever. Some have had years of preschool, while others have had none. Some may speak several languages in varying levels of proficiency. Some were read to regularly and others very little. Your child will be at an advantage if he is familiar with books and other forms of print, with the letters of the alphabet, and with some knowledge of how books are used. Most importantly, if he has learned that reading and writing are enjoyable activities that are useful in everyday life, he will be well-prepared to learn.

# ***Your Child***

## ***4 Years***

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### ***Language Development***



### **Look for your child to**

#### **Listening**

Learn a song and the actions that go with the words.

Carry out four simple, related directions in order.

Understand position words like *above*, *below*, *beside*, *in front*, and *behind*.

#### **Talking**

Use five to six words in most sentences.

Have a vocabulary of 4,000 to 6,000 words. He's learning an average of 5 new words a day. (For a bilingual child, this is the total of the words in the home language plus those in English.)

Speak more clearly and be easily understood. Some sounds are still hard: f, j, l, r, s, v, y, z, ch, sh, th, wh.

### **Ways you can help**

Choose a song and have fun repeating it together until she knows it well. This helps her listen to details and remember what she hears.

Play a "directions" game. Give her 3-4 instructions to act out. For example, pat your tummy, flap your arms, stomp your feet, sit down. Let her give you some.

Have a treasure hunt for each other. Put the afternoon snack *beside* the sink. Use position words to direct her to find it.

Ask her interesting questions that begin with *what*, *how*, and *why*. This gives her practice describing objects, events, and relationships.

Comment on new words when you hear them. Talk about what they mean.

Play a game where you each use the new word in a sentence.

Pronounce words clearly yourself, but don't insist that she work on getting a sound right.

### **Look for your child to**

Use future tense.

Carry on a conversation for seven turns on the same topic.

### **Reading Readiness**

Read her name when she sees it printed.

Predict a reasonable ending to a simple story.

Fill in a rhyming word, missing from a rhyme. For example, Jack and Jill went up the \_\_\_\_\_.

'Read' familiar words and signs in her environment (McDonald's, STOP, Cheerios, etc.).

Show interest in letters and printed text. She might ask, "What does that say?" or "Where does it say that?"

### **Ways you can help**

Let your child help you plan. You will use the future tense when you talk together about outings, meal preparation, or pretend play scenes.

Every day, have two-way talks about something you saw or did together. Share observations and ideas equally.

Put her name on many things: her books, her place at the table, in magnetic letters on the refrigerator.

Stop during a story and ask what your child thinks might happen next.

Play with rhyming together. Help your child make up long lists of rhyming words, including nonsense words.

Make a book of words, with pictures, that your child can read. Together, choose ads for familiar stores, food products, toys, etc.

Answer all her questions patiently. You will teach her to connect print to words she knows.

Ask your child to tell you a story about a picture. Write what she says, below the picture. Read it back to her. Let her 'read' it. Display her work.

### **Look for your child to**

Enjoy hearing some favorite stories read over and over.

### **Writing**

Use scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write.

Try to write for a variety of purposes, such as lists, messages, and pretend play.

Print some letters, especially those letters in her name.

### **Ways you can help**

Set a special time to read to your child every day. Read more often than that, when you can.

Encourage and accept pictures, scribbles or random letters as emerging writing.

Providing a variety of materials: crayons, papers, envelopes, rubber stamps and pads, folders, magnetic letters, chalk and chalkboard, keyboard, etc.

Encourage her to “write” her name.

# Discipline: A Positive Approach

Most parents of young children say that their main parenting concern is discipline. What is appropriate discipline? How much is too much or too little? It is important to think, read, and talk about the goals and the many techniques of discipline.

**Discipline** = teaching children self-control and responsibility to others

**Punishment** = controlling children through fear

The purpose of discipline is to protect your child and teach him socially acceptable behavior. As his first and most influential teacher, you have the responsibility to guide him in the right direction. Your child will learn self-control, ways to get along with others, and how to determine right from wrong better through guidance than punishment. When you set and enforce limits to encourage desired behavior, you are teaching your child self-control and helping him to feel good about himself. Discipline does not mean controlling your child. It is a learning process that will empower your child to make his own decisions to act responsibly.

Some of your child's behavior occurs because of his development. As your child develops, he also learns to behave in ways that are socially acceptable. He develops ways to control his emotions by interacting with caring, loving adults. He learns appropriate social skills needed throughout his life by seeing them modeled for him. Many challenging behaviors disappear as children mature.

Discussing discipline can be difficult. You probably learned many of your opinions about discipline when you were a child and in most cases under emotional circumstances. You may want to discipline your children the way your parents did, or you may want to handle things differently. Your opinions may also be affected by your cultural and extended family beliefs and by the viewpoints of your friends. If you have concerns about discipline techniques, discuss them with your parent educator. Discipline requires patience and consistency, and your parent educator can provide support and information to help you.

## Tips for Parents

### Do...

- Set limits
- Be consistent
- Be firm
- Be realistic
- Listen carefully
- State expectations clearly
- Give encouragement and acknowledge efforts
- Stop dangerous, destructive behavior
- Redirect misbehavior
- Ignore minor misbehavior

### Avoid...

- Accusing
- Controlling
- Blaming
- Criticizing
- Humiliating
- Ridiculing
- Using sarcasm or cruel humor
- Nagging and fussing
- Being over-permissive

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## Catch him being “good”

It is important to focus on your child’s positive behavior. Think of his growth toward self-discipline as a progression of small victories rather than a series of negative behaviors. When you recognize his efforts and contributions (no matter how small they seem) toward his own well-being and that of your family, you help reinforce his positive behavior. This also gives you opportunities to promote your child’s view of himself as capable and worthwhile. Even his mistakes should be seen as worthy efforts! Applaud any attempts he makes in the right direction.

## Natural and logical consequences

Natural and logical consequences are types of discipline that encourage children to think about their own actions and how they affect others. When you allow your child to experience the results of his actions (rather than protecting him from negative consequences) he will learn from them. A *natural* consequence is the direct result of an action when other people do not interfere. For instance, if your child leaves his book outside after you have reminded him to bring it inside, and then it rains, his book will be ruined.

*Logical* consequences are those that parents impose in situations in which it would be unsafe to let their child experience the direct results of his actions. For instance, if your child insisted on riding his tricycle or bike in the street, despite your warnings, you would not let him experience the natural consequence of being hit by a car. Instead, a logical consequence would be to take the bike away for a day or two. Logical consequences work best if there is a connection between the misbehavior and the resulting consequence, and if the “punishment fits the crime.” In other words, the consequence should be suitable for the behavior. You may want to talk with your parent educator about suitable consequences for your child. Natural and logical consequences are effective disciplinary techniques that work long-term, not just as temporary fix-ups.

## Strategies for effective discipline

There are essentially three strategies needed for effective discipline. They include:

- A positive, supportive, and loving relationship between you and your child. You can help to achieve this by playing with your child and showing him warmth and affection.
- The use of praise and encouragement to increase desired behavior. You can give your child frequent hugs and praise when he behaves well.
- The removal of desired activities or the use of punishment to reduce or stop undesired behavior. You can remove positive reinforcement through the use of time-out or (for an older preschooler) the removal of privileges. A less recommended technique is to apply some form of deterrent or punishment.

It also is helpful for you to:

- Provide a consistent daily schedule at home. This reduces stress, resistance from your child, and shows respect for him.
- Enforce rules the same way every time your child misbehaves.
- Spend regular “special time” with your child.
- Listen carefully to your child, and help him learn to use words to express his feelings.
- Provide your child with opportunities to make choices, and help him learn to look at the potential consequences of his choices.
- Model predictable behavior, respectful communication, and problem-solving skills.

## What to do when he misbehaves

It may be best to ignore minor misdeeds. Keep your child’s development in mind. Most preschoolers cannot hold still for long periods of time, and they tend to be forgetful. If you think your child is misbehaving to get attention, try to ignore him. However, any behavior that puts your child or others in danger, or shows a refusal to comply with reasonable adult expectations, or

interferes with social interactions (for instance, continual interruption, whining, yelling) requires you to take action. Some behavior needs an immediate response because of danger, while other types require consistent consequences to reduce them over time.

Generally, there are two ways to handle unacceptable behavior—removing positive reinforcement or using punishment. Popular methods of removing positive reinforcement include time out (in which your child loses your attention and praise), and loss of a valued privilege (for instance, watching T.V. or videos, playing on a computer, or special snack). Frequently used deterrents include disapproving statements and physical punishments like spanking.

### Use of time out

Time out is an effective method of managing misbehavior, but it requires patience and practice on your part. It involves moving your child to a chair, corner, or room, and requiring him to sit there for a period of time. In order for time out to be effective, it must be used consistently, but not excessively, and for an appropriate duration of time. One rule of thumb recommends one minute of time out for each year of age, **after your child has calmed down**. In the beginning, you may need to stay with your child to teach him how to comply by staying in his seat. In addition, you must decide, beforehand, what to do what to do if your child gets up from the chair or leaves the corner.

Time out is not effective immediately, but is very effective in the long-term. At first, you probably will see increased negative behavior as your child tests you to see if you mean what you say. If you accept this behavior as normal and ignore it, the outbursts will decrease. If you respond by talking to, or yelling at, your child, the negative behavior will worsen.

It will be hard to ignore your child if he increases negative behavior, or if he begins to plead or bargain for the time out to end. A common reason

for the failure of time out is that parents cannot deal with their own distress during the time out. If you criticize your child for his negative reaction to being put in time out, you reward him with your attention. If you are going to use time out, prepare yourself for a period of protests and testing until your child learns you mean business. It is important that you remain calm and control your emotions. Eventually, his outbursts will stop.

### Punishment

Punishment, or deterrents, includes disapproving verbal statements (reprimands) and actions that cause physical pain to your child. Both are effective only if:

- You and your child are clear about what the problem behavior is and what consequences he can expect when he behaves that way.
- You provide a reason for the consequence. This helps your child learn appropriate behavior.
- You act immediately when the targeted behavior first occurs.
- You consistently provide an appropriate consequence each time the behavior occurs.
- You act **calmly and with empathy**.

### Verbal reprimands

Reprimands can be temporarily effective when you use them occasionally, and when you target them toward specific behavior. As with time out, you must remain calm and in control of your temper. Your reprimand should include a reason why your child should stop what he is doing and a statement of the behavior you desire. Remain firm, but friendly, and resist name calling. For instance, it is more effective to say, “When you throw the ball in the house, you might break something. Please stop now,” than, “You are a bad boy.” Correctly used, verbal reprimands can be effective in helping your child change his behavior.

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## Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment involves causing physical pain to your child in response to undesired behavior. It can range from a slap on the hand when a child is about to touch a hot stove, to abuse (beatings or scaldings). Because of this wide range, corporal punishment is controversial. Spanking refers to striking a child with an open hand, on his buttocks or extremities, in order to change behavior without causing physical injury. It should always be administered when the parent is calm.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), other types of physical punishment are **always unacceptable** because they “may be dangerous to the health and well-being of the child.” These include striking a child with an object, or with such intensity that it results in marks lasting more than a few minutes; pulling a child’s hair; jerking him by the arm; shaking a child; and any physical punishment delivered in anger and with the intent to cause pain. **Overall, spanking is an ineffective form of punishment that carries the real danger of child abuse, increased aggression on the part of the child, and emotional scars.**

The best medicine is prevention. If you can create a warm, loving relationship with your child, and remember that discipline is a learning process, you will help your child gradually become the warm, loving adult you want him to be.