

# Learning

## *How to help your child learn*

Learning is a lifelong process that begins at birth if not before.

As a parent, you play a very important role in developing your child's learning potential. You are your child's first and most important teacher.

Good learners grow up in homes that encourage learning. You want your child to observe the world around him or her. You want your child to be curious. A curious child is the best learner.

During the years leading up to school, children take great strides in developing their mental abilities and parents can help them. Sometimes you help naturally. Just by talking to your baby, he or she will learn from you. Other times, you have to make a more deliberate effort, such as saying "cup" when your baby reaches for a cup.

Your role as a teacher should not stop when your child starts school. School children need their parents' love, support, and interest to develop their full learning potential.

### **On Back**

**Some ways you can help your child become an eager learner.**

A publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund For Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

For more Parenting Guides and other information, visit the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development on the Internet at [www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/familyissues/guides](http://www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/familyissues/guides)

**You & Your Child** may be reproduced for non-profit use only.



## You & Your Child



# How to help your child learn

## Early Years

Early in life, children should be surrounded with love and an environment that invites them to explore the world and encourages creativity and curiosity.

### **Simple pleasures help babies**

When your child is an infant, appeal to his or her senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell.

- Talk and sing to your baby as much as possible.
- Fill your baby's room with bright colors.
- Play music.

### **Use everyday opportunities to teach**

- Point out different shapes, colors, and textures. Let your child explore them.
- Respond to your baby. For example, when your baby makes a face or a sound, imitate it or smile.
- Talk about what is going on around you, even if it is just the weather.
- Show your child new things. Point out trees, different birds, big trucks, planes, animals.

### **Use physical activities**

Some physical activities help develop your child's muscles and encourage learning.

- Activities that help develop large muscles include playing with a wagon, running, playing with balls, and climbing.
- Activities that help develop small muscles include playing with clay, cutting and pasting, coloring and painting, building things, and using a pencil.

### **Encourage creativity**

Sing songs together, encourage your child to color or draw pictures, build things, listen, dance, or sing.

### **Stimulate reading**

- Read to young children every day.
- Encourage your child to ask questions about the stories. Ask what will happen next.
- Allow your child to choose the books you read.

## When School Starts

Your child will have a new teacher when school starts, but you can still do a lot at home to help your child learn.

- Give your child a study area. Find a quiet place with good lighting where your child can do school work.
- Provide books. A child's dictionary will come in handy. So will a beginner set of encyclopedias.
- Keep your child reading. Now that your child is learning to read, he or she should read every day for at least 15 minutes. Take the time to let your child read to you. Show that you are interested in the story, even if you have heard it ten times.
- Visit the library regularly.
- Encourage writing. Help your child write thank-you notes or letters to friends and relatives.
- Teach problem solving. Don't give all the answers or do it for your child. Help your child figure things out. For example, how many days to his or her birthday? Have your child count the days on a calendar.
- Discuss what your child is curious about. Ask "why" questions. Try to answer all of his or her questions. If you can't, search for the answer together.

### **Get involved in your child's education**

- Know what is going on in class. Listen to what your child tells you about school and what happens in his or her classroom.
- Insist on good attendance.
- Meet the teacher. Schedule a conference with the teacher to discuss your child and what the students are learning.
- Visit the school. Schedule a time to observe your child's class.
- Get involved in school activities. Learn about school organizations, such as the PTA. Attend school activities, especially those your child is involved in.

