

Sharing Likes and Dislikes

I like to push the cart.

To get to know each other better, express your likes and dislikes and encourage your child to do the same.

Your child will learn that people have many opinions and his are respected and valued.



Why this is important

When we do not like something or someone, words are a useful substitute for physical aggression. When you model a way to express what your child likes or dislikes about a situation, he will learn that feelings have names and can be talked about. Being able to express his feelings is important as your child develops a strong sense of self and builds relationships with others.

What you do

- Talk about a situation, such as going to the doctor, with your child: *I like going to the doctor. There are nice magazines in the waiting room, and the doctor helps us feel better. What do you like about going to the doctor?*
- Give your child time to think. Accept his opinion when he answers.
- Add to the conversation by talking about what you do not like about going to the doctor. *I don't like going to the doctor because sometimes we have to wait. What do you not like about going to the doctor?*
- Accept his feelings and comment calmly. *So that's what you don't like.*
- Be sure to make your child feel comfortable with his answers. Trying to change his feelings or making him feel guilty about them will discourage him from expressing them again.
- Refrain from correcting misinformation during this activity. Listen, and help him put his feelings into words.

Another idea

Many topics work for this activity such as going to the supermarket, birthday parties, big sisters, long car rides, etc. Always give your full attention to your child during the conversation.

Let's read together!

I Like Myself
by Karen Beaumont

My Family

My cousin.

With your child, make and talk about a display of family pictures organized into groups.

Your child will gain understanding and words to help him talk about family relationships.



Why this is important

Your child will enjoy seeing and talking about the pictures of his family and will begin to associate each with the real person. At an age when children try to understand concepts by sorting them into groups and categories, it is helpful for them to gain some knowledge of the relationships among family members. Words like *aunt* and *uncle* will gain more meaning for your child as he begins to understand that one person can be many things (*old, young, sister, mother, aunt*) and fit into more than one category.

What you do

- Put two pieces of poster board or construction paper on the wall within your child's reach.
- Label one poster "Mommy's Family" and the other "Daddy's Family," or use other titles as needed to represent two sides of your child's family.
- Put a photo of each parent next to the label and invite your child to put a picture of himself on each poster.
- Encourage family members to send photos to be added to the posters. When your child receives a photo, explain the family relationship before adding it to the correct poster: *Aunt Marie is Daddy's little sister. Grandpapa was their Daddy.*
- Give explanations using words *brother, sister, uncle, etc.*
- Point out a relative's place in the family before a visit: *Uncle John is Grandmother's son and Mommy's brother.*

Another idea

If your family is small or you and your child are not in contact with all parts of the family, make one of the posters a "Love Family" consisting of the friends who play the roles of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents for him.

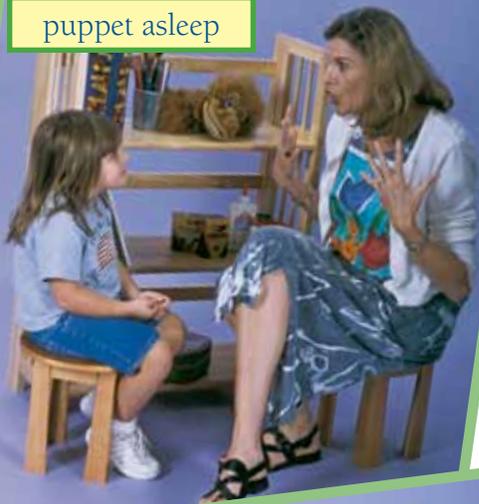
Let's read together!

No Mirrors in My Nana's House
by Ysaye M. Barnwell

Retelling the Story

And they felt scared.

puppet asleep



Share a short, original story with your child that she can retell to a puppet or a friend.

This gives your child practice in recalling the main points of a story and prepares her to remember main ideas later when she learns to read.

And they were afraid.





Why this is important

Storytelling gives your child an opportunity to remember and retell main events. Although the details of the story may change, she can piece together the main points of the story. Becoming familiar with stories and how they work will help your child when she begins to read.

What you do

- Find a puppet or stuffed animal that your child likes. Explain to her that you can tell her a story that she can share with the puppet: *You could tell Charlie a story. I'll tell you a brand new one he's never heard. Listen carefully so later you'll be able to tell the story to him.*
- Begin your story with a description of the main character, such as raccoon, followed by three clear events. Add as many details as you think your child can remember. For example:

First, he went looking for someone to play with.

Then, he met a scary bear who chased him home.

At last, inside his own house he found his rabbit friend who had come to play.

- Encourage your child to retell the story to the puppet or stuffed animal.
- Make the puppet or stuffed animal an enthusiastic listener so that your child stays engaged in the storytelling.

Ready to move on?

Invite the puppet to retell a story to your child, but make sure to change a few details so that the puppet makes some mistakes. This gives your child an opportunity to correct the puppet and recall more about the story.

Let's read together!

The Hello, Goodbye Window
by Norton Juster

Inspect and Collect

*I found a
bumpy rock!*

Over several weeks, encourage your child to find treasures, display them, and talk about them.

Your child will express his personal choices and begin to maintain an interest in things over a period of time.





Why this is important

You can encourage your child to notice interesting objects in his environment and then help him sustain that interest by keeping the found items available as a collection. He will have the chance to make choices, develop his own personal tastes, and maintain a project for a period of time.

What you do

- Notice when your child picks up and admires small objects he finds. Begin by talking about his new discovery: *I see that rock has gray and white specks in it. It'd be fun to save it. I wonder if there are any other interesting rocks around here.*
- Discuss how the gathered items could be saved as a collection. Your child can create a display of his new treasures.
- Try displaying hard items like rocks and shells in a jar of water to make the colors brighter. Place fragile items in the individual sections of an egg carton. Stick feathers in a small foam block.
- Talk with your child about other ways his collection can be displayed.
- Admire the collection often and wonder aloud about other items that could be added to it.

Another idea

Allow your child to dismantle his collection at any time. He may find interest in a new group of objects.

Let's read together!

Flotsam
by David Wiesner

Bigger Than Me



This box is bigger than Jim.

Invite your child to compare his body to other objects (such as a box) or spaces (such as a room).

Your child will begin to understand that size is relative and he may use phrases such as *smaller than*.



Tell me about the box James has his foot in.



Why this is important

Your child will understand *bigger than* and *smaller than* if he can look at an object and compare it to something else. Making these comparisons gives him greater experience in using size words, and he learns to relate one object to another to judge size. Learning to consider an object in relation to another object is a basic step in evaluating and comparing.

What you do

- Stand with your child in the middle of a room. Say, *Without moving from our spot, let's try to touch the walls. Now the ceiling!*
- Point out why you were unsuccessful: *The room is big. It is bigger than we are.*
- Go with him into a closet or smaller room and repeat the action. Point out, *This room is smaller than the other.*
- Listen carefully to his comments to make sure he understands *bigger* and *smaller*.
- Offer him two cardboard boxes. One box should be big enough for him to sit inside, the other should be too small for him to get into.
- Suggest he get in the smaller one. Ask him why he thinks he does not fit. Help him use the words *smaller than I am*.
- Invite him to try to sit in the big box. Hand him the small box so that he can compare the two boxes up close.

Another idea

Make a large rope circle on the floor and invite your child to march around it. Then form a smaller circle for comparison. He can also use his body to measure by comparing objects to his hand, thumbnail, or foot. Let him find something that is *smaller than my thumbnail*.

Let's read together!

The Dinosaur Who Lived in My Backyard
by B.G. Hennessy

How About You?

Who has a cat at home?

Me! I do!



Use a puppet to talk and ask questions that encourage your child to talk about herself.

Through this conversation your child will express and expand her own concept of herself.



Why this is important

A puppet can help your child express her own concept of herself. Even if she answers only in single syllables or nods, this game gives her a chance to think and talk about herself. As your child answers questions about herself, she is slowly forming her present and future self-image. She will be encouraged to expand her vocabulary by copying and using words she hears others say.

What you do

- Choose a puppet to share with your child. Invite her to join the puppet in a conversation.
- Form simple questions, spoken by the puppet, for your child to answer. A few sample questions could be:

Puppet:

Hi, my name is Calvin. What's your name?
Oh, Ann is a pretty name! I'm 2, how old are you?
That sounds so big! I can't wait until I'm 4. Do you like cats?
Me, too. They're so soft. Do you know anyone with a cat?
Oh, you are lucky! Do you help feed your cat?
I bet your Mommy is glad to have you as a helper.
What is your favorite thing about your cat?

Child:

Ann.
Four.
Yes.
I have one.
Sometimes.
Yes.
She sits in my lap and she purrs.

- Encourage your child to use words that the puppet has used. For example, if the puppet says *fuzzy*, ask a question such as: *How does your cat's fur feel?* This will prompt your child to remember and use the new word.

Another idea

Return to the puppet activity whenever your child may have something new to share, such as a new pair of shoes or details about a visiting relative.

Let's read together!

Little Bunny Finger Puppet Book
by Klaartje van der Put

Fork Foods

*Are green beans
a fork food?*

Ask your child about specific foods at meal times and help her determine whether or not each food is eaten with a fork, a spoon, or fingers.

This experience will encourage her to classify things in a new way: how they are eaten.





Why this is important

By talking about foods and how they are eaten at mealtime, your child will learn the names of foods and begin to classify them. She will begin to think about the different ways a food can be eaten. A strawberry, for example, can be eaten using her fingers or with a fork. Working with food and the appropriate eating utensils is part of handling the ritual of eating in culturally acceptable ways.

What you do

- Invite your child to make three charts with you. The charts should be labeled “Fork Foods,” “Spoon Foods,” and “Finger Foods.” Your child can add to the charts by drawing a fork, spoon, or hand under the related heading.
- Place the charts in a prominent part of the kitchen. Go to the chart before each meal and talk about what food you will serve: *Tonight I cooked fish and rice. We are also having applesauce. What will you use to eat the fish: a fork, a spoon, or your fingers?*
- Offer your child a pencil or crayon to draw a picture of the food on the appropriate chart. If you are eating something that comes in a package such as frozen vegetables or cereal, invite your child to cut out the label and tape it to the correct chart. Repeat the process with each food in the meal.
- Encourage your child to think about which foods might belong on more than one chart, such as the rice.
- Return to the chart regularly with your child as she thinks of more foods to add.

Let's read together!

Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z
by Lois Ehlert

Another idea

You can play a version of the game when you go to the supermarket. Walk through the produce department and look together for a fork food, a spoon food, and a finger food to take home. Talking about foods in the produce section encourages your child's interest in trying healthy fruits and vegetables.

Syllable Jump

Ma-ri-a.

Maria.

Show your child how to take steps or jump to match the syllables of her own name.

She will increase her awareness of the parts that make up words.



Why this is important

The actions of your child's own body can help her pay attention to the sounds of words and parts of words. When a young child learns something through her body as well as her mind she understands it better. Hearing and responding to the smaller sound units in words (syllables) is part of the foundation for reading and spelling.

What you do

- Write your child's name on a piece of construction paper, allowing plenty of cutting space between each syllable. (If all of your child's names are one syllable, use the name of a favorite person, pet or stuffed animal.)
- Help your child cut the syllables apart. Touch the syllables as you say them. *Kim-ber-ly. Grand-pa.*
- On the floor, ground, or sidewalk, invite your child to help you make a row of connected boxes—like a small hopscotch drawing, going from right to left. The boxes can be made outside with sidewalk chalk or inside with masking tape. There should be one box for each syllable in the child's name.
- Help your child put the cut-apart syllables in the boxes going from left to right.
- Explain that you are going to jump into one box for each syllable of her name. As you slowly repeat her name, hop into a box for each syllable. A bunny hop (jumping with both feet) works well in this game.
- Invite your child to try. Hold her hand for balance if she needs it.

Another idea

If your child is ready and interested, let her jump on the syllables of some other words, such as her last name, the name of her preschool, or her favorite food.

Let's read together!

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

by Bill Martin Jr and John Archambault

When, How, Why?

Why is it so cold?



In daily events or after reading a book, occasionally ask a question that begins with one of the words *when*, *how*, or *why*.

These questions will stimulate your child to think more deeply about time, processes, and reasons.



Why this is important

Asking *when*, *how*, or *why* questions will deepen the level of your child's thinking. To answer them she will need to talk about time, process, and reasons. This encourages her to give longer answers with several parts. Thinking about *how* and *why* are some of the hardest tasks we do throughout life. This early practice can give your child a pattern of successful thinking to follow and to build on as she grows older. When she answers questions during book reading, she is building her early literacy skills.

What you do

- Ask your child *when*, *how*, and *why* questions during conversation or reading. *When do we eat breakfast? How did you dig that deep hole? Why did the three bears go for a walk?*
- Give your child plenty of time to think about her answers to these challenging questions. Return to simpler questions if she struggles to answer.
- Pause after reading a page of a book together and ask one of the questions, so she can think about the story.

Another idea

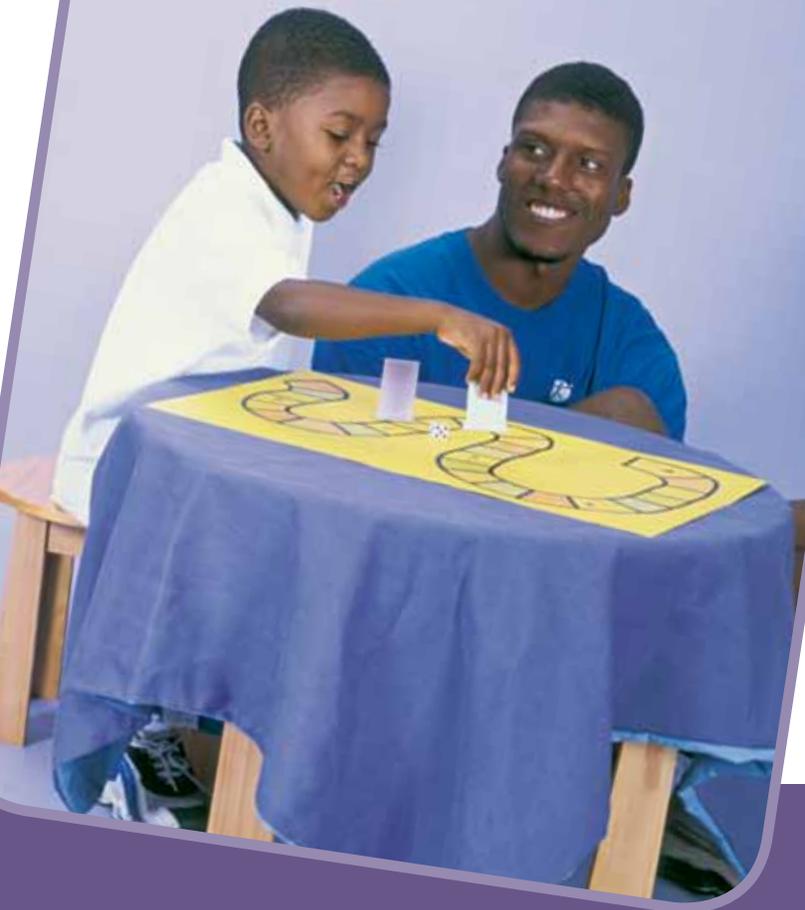
Continue to ask questions that gently test your child's knowledge. Many everyday moments such as riding in the car, taking a bath, or drawing with chalk can offer opportunities for question-and-answer sessions with your child.

Let's read together!

Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf
by Lois Ehlert

Move Up Five

*One, two, three,
four, five.*



Create an easy board game that lets your child move a marker as he counts from one to five.

Your child will remember and understand these basic numbers if he has a lot of enjoyable practice using them.



Why this is important

Your child may already know how to count to five, but he may not understand that each number from one to five stands for a definite quantity. He will practice using the words for numbers up to five as he verbally and physically counts out five spaces on the game board. Numbers are used every day by your child, and he will continue to practice counting skills as he grows older.

What you do

- Make five cards that either have one, two, three, four, or five dots on them. Make the dots large enough for your child to point to and count them.
- Find or make a simple path game board with spaces large enough for a game marker to touch each square as your child advances the piece.
- Invite your child to join you in a counting game. Using your path game board and cards with dots to determine the count, the two of you will take turns moving your markers. Explain the game to him: *We'll take turns choosing a card. The dots on the card will tell us how many spaces to move our marker.*
- Practice choosing a card and counting the dots.
- Encourage your child to move the marker in a hopping motion as you play so that each space can be counted as it is touched.
- Emphasize differences in numbers by saying: *Five! That's a lot.* Or, *Two is a quick hop.*
- Stop the game when your child's interest ends, which may be before the game is over.

Another idea

Throughout your day together, invite your child to count out five objects when he sees them.

Let's read together!

Rooster's Off to See the World
by Eric Carle