

Wonder Years

Helping parents and caregivers make the most of a child's early years.



YOUR CHILD 36-42 MONTHS

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Waiting games

By Rachelle Hughes

Teaching your child to wait

Three- and four-year-olds find it hard to wait. Waiting is hard to do at fast food restaurants and even harder to do at the amusement park. And they certainly hate waiting in line with you at the post office. Sometimes I have a hard time waiting, too, especially at those really busy intersections when my son tells me to "just go," despite the cars racing by.

How do you teach your preschoolers to wait? How do you make the agonizing minutes pass quickly for your child and yourself? Here are some ways to pass the time in the doctor's office, the post office or in line at the fast food restaurant window.

First take a big deep breath

The first step to teaching our children how to wait is to learn how to wait ourselves. When we tell the driver in front of us to hurry, our children think it is natural to expect everyone to hurry up and get out of our way. So, breathe and learn to wait. If your impatient child tells you to push the other cars off the road during

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WAYNE **RESA**
Leading... Learning for All

Waiting games

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rush hour, teach him about compassion for others. Remind him they have a right to be driving on the road, too.

Find child-friendly shops

One of the postmasters at our local post office put a toy box in the lobby. He filled it with all kinds of fun, inexpensive toys. My son now loves to go to the post office. He can sit and play while I wait in that long line. The play area is nearby and I can see and talk to him from the line.

One of our local stores just bought several new grocery carts that have a child's car in front. Preschoolers climb in the front and pretend they are driving down the grocery aisles. Make suggestions to your local business owners. Thank the business owners who offer child-friendly services.

Play a game

When everyday errands require long waits, learn to enjoy the time you have with your child. Here are a few simple waiting games.

1. **Play an alphabet version of I Spy.** Take turns saying "I Spy the letter 'L,'" while the other tries to find an "L" on posters, signs, or magazine covers. Or practice alphabet games like "Amy Ape's arms act as alligators, airplanes and angels." Your child can act out some of these games from his car seat.
2. **Make up silly stories.** Ask, "Where do you think that person walking down the



sidewalk is going? Is he going to the circus to ride elephants? Is he going to climb the mountains and have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich picnic?" Ask your child to come up with a silly story about where the person walking down the street is going.

3. **Tell each other "knock-knock" jokes.**

You can find simple joke books at libraries and bookstores if you need ideas.

4. **Read a good book.** Doctor's offices are great places to catch up on your reading time with your child. Doctor Seuss books are some of our favorite waiting books.
5. **Bring a quiet-time bag** stuffed with favorite coloring books, drawing paper, crayons and a mini Etch-a-Sketch. Keep it in the car for those especially long car rides or doctor appointments. Take it out only when your child needs to wait with you.

Just let them wait

Sometimes our preschoolers are not in the mood for playing games. Sometimes they just have to learn to sit still and wait. They might whine, they might beg, they might drive you crazy. But they, like the rest of us, must learn to wait their turn. Remind yourself—and your child—that adults can't always entertain him. Encourage him to use his imagination and watch the world.

Rachelle Hughes is a freelance writer and mother of two young children in Utah.

Manners, please!

By Kathryn Lay

Nobody likes hanging around children who are disruptive and rude. This is especially true in public places. You can teach your children to be polite, kind, and honest—in public and at home.

Follow the leader. Let your children see you being polite to others. Say "please" and "thank you" when asking your child to do something—it's only fair. Too often we order and demand our children to do something, and then complain when children treat others that way.

Reward the behavior you want. Point out when another child has done something nice and say, "Wasn't that a polite thing to do?" When a child—any child—is polite to you, remember to thank her. By doing so, you're reinforcing polite behavior. My daughter's favorite thing to do while we are at the post office is to open the door for others. She is amazed and disappointed at how few adults thank her.

Tackle the teasing. No one likes to be teased or mistreated. Never make fun of another person in your child's presence. Avoid telling or laughing at ethnic jokes. When you see a person who is different or disabled in some way, answer your child's questions honestly and respectfully. Talk to your child about the feelings everyone has. If your own child is teased by another, encourage him not to respond in the same way. Remind him about the behavior of all those friends who are kind.

Make honesty your policy. When your child finds lost money or toys, remind her how sad the owner must feel. A lost dollar bill may not seem like much, but honesty in the little things instills a desire to be honest in bigger ways. Let your child see you return incorrect change or items you've not paid for. I'm amazed and humbled at how my daughter will go out of her way to return a dropped coin to a person in line ahead of us.

These tips are adapted from a longer article, "Tips for raising polite, kind, and honest kids" by Kathryn Lay. You can read the full article at www.WonderYears.info.



Making the most of story time

By Tiffany Spaulding

Did you know that reading to your children can do more than just entertain them? Reading meets their needs in many areas, including physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual. How does all that happen in one 32-page picture book? You can help by following three steps to story time success: cuddle close, choose the right book, and talk about what you read.

Cuddle up!

Take a look at how we have story time at my house. It's probably not much different from yours. My two sons, 5-year-old London and 3-year-old Max, each choose a book from the "story-time" shelves in their room.



Then the three of us squeeze into what we call "The Big Chair." I've got one arm around each of them, and we are snuggled together. They are usually fresh from the bath and in their pajamas. I can smell the baby shampoo in their hair, and I can see that Max has his pajama bottoms on backwards. London still has dirt behind his left ear.

On this day, we are reading a wonderful story by Brock Cole titled, *Larky Mavis*. We use teamwork to turn the pages. London turns the page half way and Max finishes the turn. While reading the story,

we talk about it. Max likes the pictures the best. London's favorite part is the angel. We talk about the theme of the book and we all agree it is not good to judge people, especially when you don't have all the facts. (You'll have to read *Larky Mavis* to understand what that means.)

What has happened in this twenty-minute story time? What needs have been met?

Physical: We have made a physical connection. Researchers say that children—like all of us—benefit from the power of human touch.

Intellectual: We have carried on a conversation that required us to think. It even included a difference of opinion.

Spiritual: The content of this book has allowed us to discuss our beliefs and values.

Social: We have talked about social issues and about how people behave and why.

Emotional: The entire experience has given the children a sense of comfort and security just before being tucked into bed. We've also made good memories.

Tiffany Spaulding is a freelance writer and a mom in Tacoma, Washington.



Wonder Kid

This is Chyna Denaye. Chyna lives with her family in Detroit, Michigan. Chyna enjoys playing house and "pretend" with her cousin. She also likes to draw and paint. Often Chyna likes to dress up in "granny" clothes and wigs. She also enjoys writing and being read to. She especially likes the story "The Three Little Pigs." Her mom says she has read that book to her so many times that now Chyna can read it to her.

When Chyna and her mom read together, they are building all sorts of skills Chyna will use later in school to help her learn. She's learning new words, stretching her attention span and expanding her memory. Chyna doesn't know all that. For now, Chyna and her mom are just having fun.

Coming next issue:

- How to help children choose good books
- Tips for talking about books you read



Help for picky eaters



By Pamela Kock

Has mealtime with your child become a battleground? Do you worry your child may not be getting enough healthy foods to eat? You're not alone. Almost every parent has these concerns at some point. Your reaction to the problem may affect your child's eating habits for many years to come.

Picky eater or "tasteful" gourmet?

Make a list of every food the child will eat. You may learn he's not as choosy as he appears. If the list is very short, show it to your doctor or dietician, and ask for help. If the list includes items from every food group, even if there's only one fruit or vegetable, you can relax. Just make sure your child is generally healthy and is growing well. You can also ask your doctor or a nutritionist if your child should get a daily multivitamin.

Dig deeper

Ask yourself why your preschooler is choosy about what

he eats. The obvious reason, that he simply may not like the taste of some foods, is a valid one. Other foods may be too tough to chew or too spicy, or they may have an "icky" texture. Some children love to dip foods into sauces, while others prefer everything plain. Some like foods that crunch; others don't. Mealtimes also give the child a chance to control a part of his life. This is important to him since he has little control over anything else. Your child might enjoy the special treatment he gets when he can force you to make a special meal.

Keep mealtimes positive

Meals aren't just about food; they are times for family togetherness and fun. Sit down as a family for as many meals as possible. Try not to rush or eat on the run. Though it can be frustrating

to cook a meal the child refuses to eat, trying to force him to eat rarely works. Try not to nag, even if this means your child will skip a meal or you may have to fix a healthy snack later. Avoid getting into the habit of making a special meal for your child.

Keep food choices healthy

While you can't force a child to eat, you can teach healthy eating habits. Limit the amount of juice or other sweet drinks your child gets. Offer water instead, which will quench thirst without spoiling his appetite. Limit snacks, and make sure snacks are nutritious enough to substitute for a meal if he won't eat later. Avoid candy and desserts except for special times. If the child will only eat one fruit or one vegetable, offer it often; it's ok to substitute fruits for vegetables.

Experiment with foods

Try offering vegetables with dipping sauce. Cut foods into bite-sized portions that can be eaten with fingers. Arrange foods in a fun way. For example, instead



When should you worry about your child's eating habits?

If your child is growing at the proper rate and seems healthy, experts agree there is no reason to worry. Get help from a doctor if your child is losing weight, gagging or vomiting certain foods, or if you have any questions.

of making a sandwich for lunch, give your child the fillings with crackers so he can make his own sandwich creations. Build healthy appetites with exercise and fresh air.

Set a good example

It's hard to get a child to eat carrot sticks while you're munching on chips, or to drink water while you sip soft drinks. Sit down and eat with your child. If you seem to enjoy the food on your plate, he might decide to try it himself. Plan healthy meals for the rest of the family, and eat them at regular times so the child knows what to expect.

Most of the time, picky eating habits are no cause for concern. If your child won't eat anything but macaroni and cheese for a week, let him have it. Most children will try new foods when they're ready. Allowing the child some control over the foods he eats and making meals fun will pay off in years to come. Follow these guidelines yourself, and you'll making better food choices, too!

Pamela Kock is a writer and mom in Liberty Township, Ohio.



Getting ready for preschool

By Irene Helen Zundel

Preschool is generally a new and exciting experience for children, but it can also create worries. The setting and daily routines will differ from home, and there will be many new children to get along with.

Here are a few things you can practice at home to help your toddler move from home to school:

Teach cooperation

Have your child share a daily chore with you. "I'll put the plates on the table, you put the silverware."

Share simple chores

Teach your child to put away a toy or book after using it, or have him take out some trash.

Play the name game

Teach your child to recognize her own name. Make name tags at home and use them on your child's bedroom door and personal belongings. Write her name on artwork you display. Get a T-shirt or backpack with her name on it. Start with an upper-case (capital) letter and use lower-case letters for the rest.

Give directions for your child to follow

Make a game out of it. For example, tell your child, "Pick up that book, hop across the room, put the book on a shelf, and jump back to me." It will help her learn to follow directions.

Let your child make simple decisions

Offer choices like "Do you want an apple or orange?" or "Will we put on your shoes first or your hat?"

Provide a little structure to her day

Teach her that some activities occur in a certain order. "First we have lunch, then we take a nap. Bath, then story, then bedtime." It will help her adjust to the scheduled routines of school. Knowing what to expect will also provide comfort.

Create more opportunities to socialize

Organize a few play dates, and let your toddler play in small groups of children. It will help her adapt to one-on-one and group interactions in a school setting.

Practice preschool routines

If your child will have nap time, let her practice unfolding and folding her sleeping mat. If she will bring a lunch, buy a fun lunchbox, and teach her how to pack and unpack it, use the thermos, and what to do with leftovers and trash. In colder weather, teach how to get in and out of coats and boots. Show her how to hang up jackets and scarves.

Practice carrying a book bag or backpack

Give your child practice in packing and unpacking it. Check each day to make sure the backpack is not too heavy.

Talk in a positive way about going to school

Encourage your toddler to have a great time at school. Be enthusiastic about the school supplies you buy. It will boost your child's confidence about tackling this new challenge.

Irene Helen Zundel is a mother and a freelance writer. She specializes in writing educational and family oriented articles and books.



Grandparenting 101

Thanks for playing games, Grandpa

By Don Lindman

“Grandpa, will you play hide and seek with me?” asks 3½-year-old Gracie.

“Sure, Gracie,” I answer.

“Good,” says Gracie. “You hide right here while I count, and then I’ll come and find you.”

My grandpa mind knows that isn’t the way you play hide and seek, so I suggest, “How about if I hide somewhere in this room, and then you can try to find me?”

“No,” comes the answer. “You hide right *here* and I will come and find you.”

Rules out; imagination in

Gracie was teaching me a grandparenting lesson: when you’re playing with a preschooler, the right way is *her* way, not your way or the way the rules say to play. She had me hide in the same place several times in a row. She did the same thing herself. And for her, that was the way the game should be played.

There comes a time when a child has to learn that without rules, relationships don’t work well, but the age of 3½ is not that time. So, we play it her way.

For this preschooler, it seems success (finding Grandpa) is more important than challenge; security is more important than facing the scary unknown. She doesn’t want to fail and she doesn’t want a “lost” grandpa.

As we play, I find that adding a little imagination helps both of us enjoy it more. I grab a stuffed animal and have “Tracker Bear” help me find Gracie. “Tracker” and I talk out loud to each other, and he is always sniffing around for clues. Gracie enjoys hearing us wonder out loud where she might be.

Patience pays off

Gracie also loves to play computer games. As a computer-smart grandpa, I’ve discovered many web sites that offer free online games to play, pages to print and color, and ideas for projects to do with children. Yet I need to be sensitive to what Gracie wants to do on the computer and set aside my own ideas for awhile.

“Grandpa, will you play computer games with me?”

“Sure, Gracie. Let me show you something here that I think you’ll like.” I started up a great web site I had heard about.

“No, Grandpa. I want to play the game with the little bear.”

At first, Gracie sits on my lap and I operate the mouse. Before long she is sitting on my desk chair, mouse in hand, and doing quite well on her own. I stay nearby, waiting to help when she gets frustrated.

Sure, I get bored. I remember back to when my own children were young. I was



so tired of playing Chutes and Ladders™ and couldn’t wait for the day when they would play things that interested me.

Well, that day came. When it did, I discovered they weren’t interested in doing those things with me; they were more interested in being with their friends. I learned that a very precious time was gone forever.

So I gladly spend time with Gracie, because this time, too, is very short. We are creating a lifetime of memories. One memory I will cherish dearly is hearing her say, “Good night, Grandpa. Thank you for playing with me.”

Don Lindman is a grandpa and newspaper columnist in Batavia, Illinois.



Note: Grandparents who learn computer skills will find a wealth of grandparenting information and activities with just the click of a mouse. Plus, they will be able to keep up with computer-smart grandchildren, like Gracie.

However, many experts today believe adults should limit children’s total screen time. This includes time watching TV and videos, playing computer games, and exploring the Internet. They believe young children learn better by interacting with “real world” playthings and people. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no more than **one to two total hours** of quality TV and videos a day for older children and **no screen time for children under the age of 2.**

The AAP also suggests making media time family time, much like the author does with Gracie. Whenever possible, watch TV and play computer games with your children and discuss what they see, hear and read.

Special Attention

SELECTING TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

By Irene Helen Zundel

Play is important for children. Through play, children learn to control their world and interact with objects and people in it.

For many young children, or for children of any age with special needs, play can become frustrating, because their movement and abilities are limited. You can help by providing toys designed for easy use that make play and learning more fun.

When toy shopping for toddlers or children with special needs, look for toys that:

1. **Appeal to your child's many senses.** Are there lights, sounds, textures and colors that will engage and stimulate your child?
2. **Are easy to use.** Are buttons, levers and switches easy to operate and manipulate?
3. **Adapt to your child's limitations.** For example, if a child is in a wheelchair, would the toy fit easily on a tray?
4. **Are built for success.** Is it a toy your child can play with in his own way, without causing frustration? Does it lend itself to open-ended exploration?
5. **Can be adjusted.** Can you vary the height, speed, volume, or level of difficulty?
6. **Call for action.** Will your child get to actively play with the toy or just get to watch something happen?
7. **Are durable and safe.** Can the toy be washed or cleaned? Is it water-resistant? Are its parts too small to prevent choking? Is it the right size for your child's age and strength?
8. **Are versatile.** Does the toy work with other toys your child has? Can he use it in a variety of ways?
9. **Appeal to other children as well.** Is it a toy that will invite friends to play along? Can it be used by more than one child at a time?
10. **Fit your child's age, ability and interests.**

Ms. Zundel is a parent and freelance author whose articles focus on education and family.

Resources

800-942-HELP—This Parent Helpline offers 24-hour answers to your parenting questions, with free referrals to services that can help.

Project Find—All children develop at different rates. But if you are concerned about your child's development, **Project Find** can refer your child for a free evaluation and, if needed, help you locate educational services. Call **800-252-0052** or visit www.earlyonmichigan.org/PF.htm.

Reading aloud

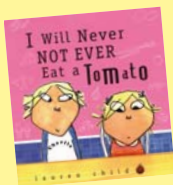
Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever by Mem Fox, Harcourt, 2001.

The Read-Aloud Handbook (5th ed.) by Jim Trelease, Penguin USA, 2001.

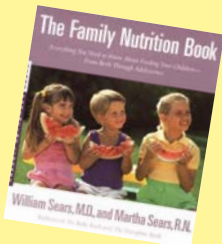
Healthy eating

I Will Never Not Ever

Eat a Tomato by Lauren Child, Candlewick Press, 2000. This book may help you overcome your child's fussy eating habits. If not, you'll at least have fun reading it together.



The Family Nutrition Book: Everything You Need to Know About Feeding Your Children from Birth through Adolescence by William and Martha Sears, Little Brown & Co., 1999.



The New Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children provides a basic outline of what kinds and how much food children should eat. The Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) offers the guide along with other information about nutrition. Call **202-512-1800**; TTY, **301-504-6856**; or visit www.usda.gov/cnpp/KidsPyra/index.htm.



Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC): 800-26-Birth provides free food, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care for pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and children under five.

Going to preschool

Community Coordinated Child Care (Michigan 4C) offers resources to help parents choose the right preschool or child care provider for a child. Call **1-866-4CHILD CARE**; or e-mail mi4c@mi4c.org with questions.

Grandparenting

Grandparenting: Enriching Lives. This 30-minute video created by Civitas is available in English and Spanish. It gives guidance and ideas for making the most out of the grandparenting relationship. Order by calling **312-226-6700** or visit www.civitas.org. Ask also about their other parenting and child development resources.

Children's Trust Fund can help put you in touch with support groups and resource centers for grandparents located throughout Michigan. Call **517-373-4320**.

FamilyEdge devotes a whole section of its website to grandparents. At www.grandparentsedge.com grandparents will find information and quick learning activities.

Special Needs

Beyond Play

www.beyondplay.com

The toys in their catalogue are selected in consultation with occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, developmental therapists and other experts. Call **877-428-1244** (toll free), or e-mail custserv@beyondplay.com.

PlayAndTeach.com

www.playandteach.com

This site has a lot of sections and good information. Be sure to visit their "Special Needs" link.

EParent website

www.eparent.com/toys/default.htm

Includes reviews of products for children with autism, ADD/ADHD, speech, hearing and visual impairments, and various learning disabilities.



Let's Play

<http://cosmos.ot.buffalo.edu/letsplay/>

The **Let's Play! Projects** provide education, service, and research on the effectiveness of accessible materials and supports to promote playfulness in young children with disabilities. **716-829-3141**.

You can find all the resources mentioned in this publication at www.WonderYears.info.

Helping parents make a difference, right from the start.

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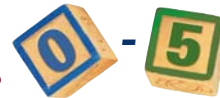
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Wonder Years

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Tricks of the trade

Words to see and say

Submitted by Sandra Jo Jackson,
Mt. Clare, West Virginia

When my son was learning to talk, we tried to pronounce our words carefully. We used a normal tone of voice, but we tried to speak clearly and not mumble our words. As he began to use more words, I printed each word he learned on separate white index cards using a black marker. I then taped a card with the word WINDOW on the window, TOY on a toy, LAMP on a lamp and so on.

When we used the items, I would put my finger on a card and say the word. Then he would say the word after me. For example, when opening a



window, I would point to the word and say, "this word says 'window.'"

We also tried this in other rooms in the house, but I never put up too many words at a time. I posted only six words, and I changed them from time to time. Some educators now say it's a good idea to write sentences that use the word. For example, you could write, "Don't forget to close the DOOR."

I believe writing and posting these simple, often-used words gave my son an early start on learning words and reading.

Do you have a parenting tip or trick that helped you:

- help your child learn (as this tip does),
- helped your child grow, or
- made your life easier as a parent?

Send tips or tricks to *Wonder Years*, Tricks of the Trade, 321 N. Pine, Lansing, MI 48933. We'll post the best tips to the *Wonder Years* Web site at www.WonderYears.info for other parents to read and try with their own children. Each person who sends a tip will receive a free *Wonder Years* subscription.

