

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Learning to Talk, Read, and Write

What's Inside

Family Fun! ②

Citrus Bird Feeders ②

Social Skills for Success ③

Children begin learning about language in infancy. When parents and caregivers talk, read, play, and sing with infants, they create a foundation for infants to develop language and literacy skills. While all children are unique and may begin vocalizing and saying words at different ages, they are constantly absorbing the sounds of language and how sentences are put together.

It is important for adults to speak slowly and clearly with children to allow them to differentiate between sounds and words. Make eye contact with children when you talk, use facial expressions to emphasize what you are saying, and give them time to respond. Allow children to sit in your lap while you sing or read stories so it is a

pleasant experience they want to repeat.

Provide young children with opportunities to draw on paper using crayons or markers. This allows them to begin developing the muscles and coordination needed for writing, and also provides a foundation for connecting spoken language with written language. Talk to children about their drawings and write down any words or phrases they say on their drawing to strengthen the connection between talking, reading, and writing. As children begin connecting their pictures with what you write down, they learn that the words you write are symbols that represent their personal stories.

They develop the concept that printed words represent spoken language.

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INSPIRING HOPE

The past year has been difficult for everyone. Reading with children can help start conversations about how they are feeling, offer opportunities to reflect on gratitude, celebrate our strengths, and inspire hope. Read the following books with your child and encourage them to share their thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

- *Drum Dream Girl* by Margarita Engle
- *I Am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes
- *I Can Do Hard Things* by Gabi Garcia
- *Listening with My Heart* by Gabi Garcia
- *Sing, Don't Cry* by Angela Dominguez
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Traci Sorell
- *When You Need Wings* by Lita Judge



|| GOOD STORY ||



Family Fun!

Spending time together strengthens the relationship between you and your children. Whether it is time spent relaxing together with a book, visiting a park, or working on a project, time spent together is the most important gift you can give your child. Forming strong bonds with your children helps them to feel safe and fosters trust, which allows them to communicate their fears, problems, and concerns to you. Children learn that they can confide in you, rely on you, and work together with you to find solutions to problems. The following are ideas for having fun together as a family:

- Sit down together for dinner and take turns sharing about your day or talking about family stories. You can also make a list of interesting questions and discuss two or three of them. For example: who is your funniest friend and why? What is something that upsets you? Where is your favorite place in our home? What does it mean to trust someone?
- Work on a large puzzle together that will take several days to complete.
- Take an evening walk after dinner and talk about the things you see.
- Make family photo albums and share memories about the pictures.
- Read one chapter of a book out loud to each other. For example, children's classics such as *Charlotte's Web* or *Stuart Little* by E.B. White.
- Spend a couple of hours at the park playing with a ball.
- Work on an art or cooking project together.
- Get moving with a family dance party!
- Create your own family board game on a flattened cardboard box. Decide on the object of the game and the rules. Make a simple trail of boxes that have a beginning and end point. Write clues or actions in the squares. Draw or cut and paste pictures with the theme of your game onto the board. Place stickers on small pieces of cardboard to represent each player or use small toy cars, plastic animals, or buttons as game pieces. Create a spinner, roll dice, or draw cards to take turns.



RECIPES Citrus Bird Feeders



This project gives children an opportunity to observe birds. These feeders last about a week and can be composted or disposed when the rind begins to mold.

Ingredients

- 4-6 chenille stems or pieces of yarn
- Ballpoint pen
- Orange or lemon
- 2 tablespoons nut or seed butter
- 1 tablespoon birdseed
- 1 tablespoon raisins
- 1 tablespoon popped popcorn



Instructions

1. Slice the orange or lemon in half and scoop out the fruit. It is not necessary to scrape it clean; the birds will enjoy eating some pulp.
2. Attach a chenille stem by poking one end through the rind; bend the end to secure the stem to the rind. Continue with the remaining stems. Once the end of each stem has been fastened to the rind, twist the other ends together and shape them into a hook to make a hanging basket. Alternatively, use a ballpoint pen to poke holes and thread yarn pieces to make a basket.
3. Inside the hollowed-out fruit, spread the nut butter and sprinkle in the birdseed, raisins, and popped popcorn.
4. Hang it outside and enjoy the view!





Social Skills for Success

A child's emotional development, social skills, and self-regulation skills all work together to help them be successful in school and personal relationships. Emotional development involves learning to recognize emotions, understanding how others may feel, and figuring out how to cope with difficult emotions in a constructive way. Children who are able to understand and communicate their emotions are more likely to develop strong friendships. Encourage your child to identify emotions and talk about how they are feeling. Help your child choose a comfort item like a blanket or stuffed animal, and develop a routine for calming down. Establishing predictable, consistent daily routines helps your child feel secure.

Children develop their social skills when they form friendships and learn to negotiate or compromise during play. Playing with friends gives children the opportunity to build character traits such as being trustworthy, sympathetic, and helpful. It also allows them the chance to resolve conflicts and work together as a group. Set clear guidelines with reasonable consequences for inappropriate behavior to help children understand what is socially appropriate. Mealtimes are a great opportunity to introduce manners and turn-taking in conversations. As children learn manners and practice taking turns, they develop patience and self-control.

Self-regulation refers to a child's ability to evaluate the environment, situation, and people around them in order to control and adjust their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Children use their five senses and prior experiences to analyze and respond to new people and places. For example, an infant

who seeks the comfort of a familiar object or person when they hear a loud sound is learning to regulate their feelings of fear by connecting with something that provides comfort.

Even as children are separated from traditional social settings and engaged in distance learning, they can still practice social skills. They can use an online video-conferencing platform to play a board game together, write a play to perform for others, or design a new game with friends. Safely socializing online allows children to explore the similarities and differences between virtual and in-person social skills.

Children gradually develop routines and coping mechanisms that help them learn when to step back, calm down, and reflect. Help children learn to control their bodies by playing stop and start games like Red Light/Green Light, Freeze Tag, or Simon Says. Children who have developed strategies for managing emotions will find it easier to focus and persist when faced with difficult tasks and experiences.



Read a wide variety of books with children and have print materials available in different areas of your home. Place cookbooks, food magazines, or recipe cards in the kitchen and newspapers, magazines, or books in the living room. If you own a vehicle, place maps in your car. If you enjoy spending time in nature, place maps, a field guide, or a first aid book in your backpack. Encourage your child to build their own library. You can find inexpensive books at library sales or garage/yard sales. Placing books in different areas of your house helps children understand that there are different types of print material and that each type has a specific purpose or use.

Provide children with different methods for retelling or creating stories. When you read books to children, encourage them to discuss the characters and events in the story. Children can act out a story with stuffed animals and dolls, or use art materials to create different endings or recreate their favorite part of the story. Encourage children to think deeply about the books they read by examining characters, putting events in order, and creating new stories.

Interact with your child by asking open-ended questions that inspire conversations about their work and extend their thinking. For example, if you are at the park and your child is playing in the sandbox, you could say, "I'm really hungry, what could you make me to eat?" This simple question requires them to listen to your request, develop a plan, and communicate the plan back to you. These play-based conversations provide great opportunities for children to express their interests, thoughts, and feelings. They also provide the chance to introduce new vocabulary, ideas, or concepts to children that enhance their overall learning experience.

Your public librarian can help you select appropriate books for your child. One of the most important things you can do is to let your child observe you reading. If children see that you value stories and learning, they will imitate you and feel more motivated to read and explore books on their own.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework Volume 1*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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