

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Communication Counts

Learning how to effectively communicate with others is an important part of the social and emotional development of young children.

Through relationships, children learn about themselves and others. They begin to understand how people think, feel, and communicate. Children begin building relationships and communicating from the moment they are born and start to cry, make eye contact, move their bodies, and vocalize sounds. When children build relationships with caring adults, they encounter opportunities to strengthen their communication skills. As their communication skills grow, children are more successful at developing friendships and understanding how to navigate the world they live in.



As your child's language begins to grow from babbling to two-word phrases and then complete sentences, match that growth by using increasingly complex words and sentences.

When you talk to your child, pause as you would for another adult and give them a chance to respond with sounds or movement.

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University refers to these back-and-forth exchanges as "serve and return," and their research indicates that they have a powerful impact on a child's brain development and social-emotional growth. The following are examples of serve and return exchanges that build communication skills in children.

Marisol has two children: a two-year old named

continued on back

LEARN ABOUT TRUSTLINE

In 1987, the California Legislature created TrustLine to be a resource for parents who are looking for unlicensed child care. TrustLine is the California registry of in-home and license-exempt child care providers, such as babysitters or nannies, who have passed a background check.

This is the only authorized screening program of in-home and license-exempt caregivers in the state that has access to fingerprint records from the California Department of Justice (DOJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and California's Child Abuse Central Index.

It is free for parents to use the TrustLine Registry to check the background of a potential caregiver. TrustLine can be reached by calling **1-800-822-8490** or by visiting the website at **www.trustline.org**.

Exploring Time and Measurement

Time and measurement are two math concepts that can easily be practiced at home. In fact, you probably already have all the materials you need; just add a little extra guidance and support. Look for a calendar, paper, pens or pencils, measuring tape, rulers, yarn, measuring cups and spoons, an analog clock, and a kitchen timer.

- Help your child measure things around the house with a ruler, tape measure, or piece of yarn. Compare the height, length, and width of different objects. Group household items into categories and write down measurements. Discuss the results with your child.
- When cleaning up toys, encourage your child to pick them up in a specific order. Ask your child to pick up the biggest toys and work their way down to the smallest or move from the longest toy to the shortest.



- Plant flower seeds in a small container and measure the height as it grows. Write out a schedule for watering and measuring the plant and keep a daily journal about it so that your child can also measure the time it takes to grow.
- As you and your child are waiting in line, you can use the opportunity to investigate how much time passes. Allow them to hold an analog wristwatch with a second hand that they can watch while waiting. Discuss how many seconds have passed, how many seconds are in a minute, etc.
- Add measuring cups and spoons to the water at bath time and allow your child time to explore how to fill and empty them. Ask them questions about the weight of a filled measuring cup versus an empty one, and see if they can fill two containers with equal amounts of water.

Taking the time to talk to your child about math concepts while you are playing or engaged in routine activities is a fun way to help them practice math skills. It also lets your child see how math is integral to our daily lives.

Source: "Encouraging Rich Mathematical Experiences at Home" by Ginny Haugen and Kristen Haugen (Child Care Exchange, May 2003).

RECIPES Homemade Mac and Cheese

This recipe is for mac and cheese that you can cook on the stovetop and have ready to eat in about thirty-five minutes.

Ingredients

- 1/2 pound elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 eggs
- 6 ounces evaporated milk
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 3/4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 10 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3-4 cups of raw or steamed vegetables (optional)

Instructions

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling, salted water until it is cooked but still firm, then drain. Return the pasta to the pot and melt in the butter. Toss to coat. Whisk together the eggs, milk, hot sauce (if desired), salt, pepper, and mustard. Stir the mixture into the pasta and add the cheese. Continue to stir over low heat for three minutes or until it is creamy. Make this a more filling dish by adding steamed vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, or zucchini.



Supporting Your School-Age Child

Children go through many changes once they enter school. There are a variety of new academic expectations, such as being independent, completing homework, doing more computer work, learning through group instruction, sitting for longer periods of time, and spending less time playing outside and socializing.

A child who develops strong social and emotional skills will feel more comfortable asking for help. They will also work more easily with others, adjust to new situations with less stress, bounce back from disappointments, resolve conflicts in positive ways, and achieve success with more confidence. You can assist your child as they adapt to these new expectations and environments by continuing to support their social and emotional development.

One way to offer support to your child is to help them identify the emotions they are feeling and make suggestions of ways that they can deal with those emotions. An example of this would be, "I saw you slam your book down on the table. Do you feel mad?" Wait for a response and then continue with, "I feel mad sometimes, too. Let's take a break and come back to this later." Situations like this present an opportunity to teach your child the names of emotions, learn what causes them to feel strong emotions, and help them find a positive way to deal with how they are feeling.

Your child also needs to build trusting relationships with both adults and other children. To develop a supportive relationship with your child, actively listen to them without making judgments about their thoughts or behavior. Your

child needs to know that no matter what they tell you, you will still love them. Schedule time with family members who can tell them stories about the family, help them with homework, or share a hobby. This will help your child understand their heritage and build their own identity.

Encourage them to develop friendships and play games that build up their ability to cooperate, negotiate, and develop character. When friends come to visit, you can suggest they play board games or play together outside. Strong relationships are important because when things get difficult, your child will have a team of adults and friends who can offer them help.

By supporting your child's social and emotional development, you prepare them to be more resilient when life changes and equip them with the tools they need to build their confidence, communication skills, problem-solving ability, and overall well-being.



Eddie and a four-year old named Lily. Marisol is sitting on the floor with Eddie pretending to cook with plastic plates, a measuring cup, measuring spoons, a wooden spoon, empty food boxes, and a pot. Eddie smiles and holds a plate out to Marisol while he says, "Happy birthday!" Marisol makes a surprised, happy face and asks, "Is that for me?" Eddie nods and says, "Cake!" Marisol smiles and exclaims, "Yum! I hope it's chocolate!" Then Marisol pretends to eat the cake while smiling and commenting on how delicious it is. After a few moments, Marisol passes the plate back to Eddie while saying, "Thank you, that was delicious!" Eddie smiles and says, "Welcome!" and then turns to wash the plate.

Lily has been sitting at the table nearby, coloring. Now Lily gets up and takes the picture to Marisol. "I made this for you." Marisol smiles and says, "Thank you! These colors are so beautiful. Can you tell me about the picture? As Lily explains the picture Marisol listens attentively and asks questions when Lily pauses such as, "How did you draw the flowers?" When Lily is done explaining the drawing, Marisol says, "I love it. Where should we hang it?" They agree to put it on the refrigerator next to their calendar and Marisol asks, "Can you please hang it up for me with tape?" After hanging

the picture, Lily looks at the calendar and asks, "What are we doing tomorrow?" Marisol points to the calendar and says, "In the morning, I will drop you off at school, and when I pick you up in the afternoon, we will go visit grandma and grandpa."

In this story, Marisol supports the social and emotional development of her children by building their communication skills during play. The children are learning to listen respectfully when someone is speaking and wait for their turn in the conversation. They are also hearing new words, practicing how to explain their own thoughts or ideas, developing confidence in their ability to communicate with others, and strengthening their relationships with each other. As children strengthen their communication skills, they find it easier to expand their world and build friendships with others, and creating new relationships increases children's opportunities to continue building their communication skills.

Sources: Information from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University was accessed from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/key-concept/serve-and-return> in September 2025.

ABOUT CHS

For 134 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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