

Celebrating Our Differences

At 4 ½ your child has become very aware. In these years, children notice the many differences among people. “Why does she have a fake hand?” “Is that lady with the big stomach having a baby too?” or “Why is his skin a different colour?” These questions are innocent to your child, but possibly embarrassing to you! We need to teach our children that differences between people are normal and interesting. The more familiar children are with the many differences in the world, the more easily they accept and support people who are different from them. Seek out storybooks and TV shows, which feature people from different ethnic backgrounds. Look for opportunities to expose your children to different worlds, visit a Pow Wow at a First Nation’s reserve, visit a market or ethnic restaurant. Always remember to be respectful of differences, as your child will follow your lead.

Your child's 4th year has had its share of energy. As she moves into year 5 you may notice a calmer, more adaptable, easier to get along with little girl. Your 5 year old is keen to receive praise, especially

from parents, so she may be working hard at behaving well. Your methods of discipline will change as your child grows, but your goals won't.

You want to:

- show your child love
- treat her with respect
- teach her values and morals





Secrets, Privates and Touching

Children this age probably have some understanding about secrets, privates and touching. Most secrets are fun. A surprise birthday party is a good secret and will be exciting (and yet difficult) for your child to keep. However, there may be secrets that make your child feel nervous, frightened or sad. Make it clear to your child that there are two kinds of secrets and that the “bad” secrets should be shared with a parent or teacher. A bully who threatens your child to keep the bullying a secret is a bad secret that your child must share. Assure your child that you will be able to stop the bullying. Encourage your child to always talk to you or to an adult that they trust. Follow-up with your child to make sure the bullying has stopped.

The same kind of thing is true with touching. Hugs and kisses from family members or friends should feel good. The same hugs and touches from someone else may feel wrong. Or, someone may try to touch body parts that you and your child have called “private”. Let your child know that touches that do not feel good should always be told to parents or a trusted adult.

As your child goes off to school, to sports programs or even to homes of friends, she will run into situations that she cannot manage by herself. Encourage her to talk about feelings or situations, which do not feel good to her. Let her know that you will not be angry with her for sharing any secrets with you.



Getting to School Safely



Transportation to school will vary with each family. Some will go by car, others by school bus or public transit and some will walk. The most important aspect of getting to school is making sure your child arrives safely. Generally speaking, children under the age of nine do not have the ability to make safe choices about traffic. This is not a matter of intelligence, rather more to do with physical coordination and level of thinking. Children under nine react differently when they are scared or nervous even if they understand all the safety rules.

Here are some tips to consider for getting your child to school safely:

1. Check with your school when the schoolyard becomes supervised. Some schools offer an early supervision or a breakfast program, or a before-school group care option.
2. Always have children under the age of 9 or 10 years walk to school with a parent, adult, friend or an older, responsible child. Check with the school if they have a “buddy program” as well as information about a safe arrival program or procedures.
3. Regularly review safety rules for walking; cross at crosswalk, cross with green light and walk sign, look both ways before crossing streets, stay on sidewalks.
4. If your community has people who participate in the Block Parent Program, show your child how the Block Parent sign looks and that a house with this sign in the window is a safe place to go if they are ever lost or in trouble. To find out more about the program, visit www.blockparent.ca
5. Teach your children to be street smart. If your child is walking with an older child or sibling, make sure they know what to do if approached inappropriately.
6. Contact your school bus company to determine bus number, route and orientation days – some bus companies offer these information 1 days in late August.
7. When labelling belongings, place child's name on the inside of the clothes, knapsack, etc. so that a stranger can't use their name.
8. One backpack is easier to remember than a couple of bags.
9. Your child will need help remembering all these rules, be patient and reinforce gently.

School Bus Safety

Many children in Canada travel to school by bus. Here are some safety tips for all school age children.

1. Designate an older, responsible child to be responsible for your younger child. Some neighbourhoods may have “walking school buses” where parents take turns meeting and walking with neighbourhood children so they have an active and safe route to a bus stop or school.
2. Try to arrive at the bus stop just before the bus arrives. Children may be tempted to wander or get into mischief if they arrive too early.
3. Make sure they know what to do if they miss the bus: come back home or if at school report to a teacher. Never accept a ride without parent permission.
4. Make sure your children are visible. Use reflective tape on clothing.
5. Explain they must walk at least 3 metres (10 big steps) away when crossing in front of the bus so the driver can see them.
6. Ask your child not to run, push or horseplay while waiting.
7. Tell children to come straight home from the bus, no detours.
8. When on the bus, tell your child to sit quietly and respect the rules of the driver.

Taking a school bus to school can be an exciting adventure for your child. These simple rules help to keep our children safe while having fun.



Be Prepared

- I need you to show me how TO STOP, DROP and ROLL - you can call our local fire department for more information.
- Let's make an escape plan so we all know how to get out of the house if there is a fire. Make a safe meeting place outside our house. LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS PLAN REGULARLY AND PRACTICE IT OFTEN.
- Replace the batteries in our smoke and carbon monoxide detectors every spring and fall when we change our clocks. Make sure that the detectors are working properly.
- Do not let me use lighters or matches or play with candles. Remember that I am very curious. Sometimes I like to act as though I am an adult. I don't realize the dangers.
- Teach me to dial 911 on the phone.
- If I am near a river, lake or pool, please be sure I am wearing a lifejacket and stay with me. Do not leave even for a moment - I like to catch frogs, look for fish and float a stick or a boat. I might walk out too far without thinking and lose my balance.
- Please be near me when I am having a bath. Even at this age, I still need your supervision to keep me safe.

Be Prepared!



Physical Activity

Active Children = Healthy Children

Physical activity is an important part of everyday life. Your child needs at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day for good health. Being physically active can range from walking and playing catch to more organized sports. How can you help your child to become more physically active?

1. Be a role model. Let your child see you walking, gardening, dancing and raking leaves.
2. Help your child learn new skills. Teach your child basic skills and show her how to do these new skills safely. Always supervise your child's play.
3. Encourage your child. Praise your child for her efforts. Talk to her about the importance of having fun.
4. Provide your child with opportunities to be active. Walk to the grocery store, bike to the part or hike on a local trail.
5. Take time to be active as a family. Play hopscotch, fly a kite or organize a game of soccer.

Physical activity can improve the health and well being of your child now and throughout her life. Active children are healthy children.



Medical Care

Teeth and More...

Some children begin losing their teeth as early as 4 years old; others don't begin until their 6th birthday. Prepare your child for the fact that her teeth will come out. Her baby teeth will be replaced with adult teeth.

Your child will need help brushing her teeth until she is 8 years old or can tie her own shoelaces. Use a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste on a soft toothbrush. Make sure to brush all teeth – especially the ones at the back.

Remember to send my toothbrush with me if I go for sleepovers to my friends or grandparents house.





Organized Sports and Play

Have you ever watched a group of 4 or 5 year olds playing soccer, tee-ball or hockey? If so, you've probably seen a player or three stray away to pick flowers, do somersaults or talk with friends behind the net. This behaviour is typical and normal for children of this age who are not yet ready for organized sport.

The jury is still out on the benefits of organized sport for preschool and young school age children. The benefits of sports and games include an outlet for physical activity, social interaction, motor skills development, creativity and fun. Sometimes however, the demands of the sport or from the adults go beyond the physical and emotional readiness of your child. Coaches and parents can teach rules and skills of the sport but children maynot be ready to learn or understand what is being taught. Basic motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking and hitting a ball or puck do not develop sooner as a result of introducing them earlier. Teaching or expecting these skills to happen before children are developmentally ready may lead to long term frustration with the sport.

What is important in organized sport is child-focused fun. Adult goals and influences such as all star teams, tournaments, trophies and awards are adult by-products. Keep the environment positive, supportive, inclusive, safe and FUN. Working as a "team" can be developed through a variety of activities, not just through team sports. Encourage cooperative activities at school such as making a mural or designing a block city. At home, "team" activities can be centred around two person tasks like folding a sheet or using a dustpan. When kids hear "Good team work" or "We're finished early because you worked well together", they see the value of working or playing together.

Remember, think of what your child wants and have fun! At your child's sporting event, be careful how you behave. Your children will follow your lead.



My Behaviour

Whining, Swearing and Winning the War

Whining can drive any parent up the wall – that squeaky, high-pitched, constant complaining or request. Children don't whine because they are bad. Take time and ask yourself why your child is whining. Is she tired, hungry, or does she need a hug? When your child starts to whine, stay calm and ask her to speak properly. "Olivia, I can't understand your words when you speak like that." When she talks in a normal voice, give your full attention and determine how you will respond to the request, complaint or issue.

Once your child starts spending time with other children the type of words they use will change. These may include swearing and "bad" words. Often they do not know the meaning of the words they are using. They use the words because they have heard other kids or adults use them. They like to see the reaction from their parents when they use these words.

Children learn by example so review the sorts of words you use when you are tired, angry or upset. Try not to react to the words when your child uses them. Explaining firmly, calmly and simply that in this family those words are not used is a starting point. Helping your child understand that others are upset by his words will also reinforce your desire for him not to use these words. Have patience and be consistent. This too will pass.

Growing Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds

What is Important for My Learning?

A Secure Attachment

Attachment is a powerful, emotional relationship that develops between me and the important people in my life. Key things that you can do to help me to continue to develop a secure attachment as I get older include; protecting me during times of stress and danger, and, encouraging me to explore the world around me when it is safe.

Self-Regulation is Important

Self regulation skills help me learn. I develop self regulation through your loving and consistent responses and through lots of practice through play. Self regulation includes being able to:

- Stay calmly focused and alert or shift my attention when needed
- Control my feelings and impulses
- Tolerate frustration and be able to resist doing something tempting
- Understand how to behave in different situations
- Use information to plan, solve problems, and complete tasks

Play is Important

Play is very important to me. I learn through play. Imaginative play is best. If you give me large boxes I can create almost anything. It is also lots of fun to play with friends. If you can make arrangements, I can easily play with a friend for a long time. You will still need to keep an eye on us. We are not ready for total independence yet. I really like the time each day when we snuggle close and you read to me. It gives me some quiet time with each of you and starts a good routine for the school years ahead. Let's enjoy the time that we have together to the fullest!

I play cooperatively with two to five children. I am hanging from an observer to an explorer. Please provide lots of opportunities to experiment. I love when we cook. It is fun to **see** and **talk** about the food changing as it cooks. Creating is one of my favourite past-times. Let's fill a box with crayons, glue, odds and ends. Keep it simple. This allows me to be creative. Remember, it is the process which is important for me - not where I put the eyes, mouth or nose! I feel very important when you hang my artwork at my eye level. We can make a space in my room where I can display my artwork. Let's create a masterpiece together.

When a kindergarten pupil was asked what he had learned the first day of school, he said: "First of all, I learned that my name isn't Precious - it's Henry"



How to Develop a Lifelong Reader

Think about what it takes for a child to learn to read. Between the ages of four to nine, your child will learn around 100 phonics rules, recognize 3,000 words and probably develop a reading speed of 100 words a minute! This is just the beginning. Naturally, she will need lots of encouragement and support for this essential skill. Here are some suggestions which will help her learn and love this activity;

- Read to her every day. Establish a routine, make the story interesting, use funny voices.
- Listen to her reading, even after she becomes a good reader.
- Organize a daily/nightly quiet time so reading can happen.
- Get a library card and make regular trips. Choose different kinds of reading materials, chapter books, picture books, and comics.
- Work with her teacher at school to support the reading program.
- Role model; if children see parents reading and there are books, newspapers and magazines in the house, they want to read.
- If possible, buy books. Second hand book stores are a good place to start.
- Set rules or limit the TV and computer. Limit the time your child spends watching TV and playing video/computer games.
- Cook a favourite treat together and help your child read the recipe.
- Start early and make it fun!



Let's get EXCITED about Sounds, Words and Books!

Sharing books, songs and rhymes with me helps me use my language skills. Sentences can be broken down into words, and words can be broken down into the sounds they make. Use fun homemade instruments or clap your hands for each syllable or part you hear. For example, "Matt the cat is sleep-ing" (6 parts or syllables = 6 claps). We can have fun creating stories and rhymes together like, "Matt the cat sat on the hat". When I play with words and sounds this ways, spelling, reading and writing may be easier and more fun for me to learn.

In addition to reading books with me, we can discuss the story together. Ask me questions to teach me new vocabulary and help me understand what we've read. (For example, Who? What? Where? Why? When?). Help me to connect information in the book to my own real-life experiences. Try inventing "new" endings for the story. Encourage me to retell the story to you using the pictures. Use words like "beginning", "middle" and "end" so I can hear how stories are organized.

Oh the stories I can tell!

How I love to tell stories! When you ask me to share an exciting story, you encourage my ability to organize and describe an event to you. When we go on a trip to the zoo, help me recall what we did by taking pictures to remember the entire event. We could take pictures getting into the car, places we passed along the way to the zoo and all the animals at the zoo. When I share my story with you or other people, your comments encourage me to tell more; such as, "Wow, you were lucky to see that tall giraffe eat a leaf from a tree!" Ask me questions that need more than a "yes" or "no" kind of answer. Listen carefully to my stories. Use lots of facial expressions to show you're interested and want to hear more. Happy storytelling!



School Jitters

Some children find school stressful in the beginning and may develop some school jitters:

- She may get stomach aches, headaches or sore throats
- She may be very tearful in the mornings
- She may be quite determined she does not want to go to school

Some Reasons for the Jitters:

- Leaving and missing you.
- Siblings are at home and playing.
- She is sick.
- She has trouble coping with the noise and business of the classroom.
- She feels the teacher doesn't like her.

Some Things You Can Do:

- Listen to your child's fears and concerns.
- Let her know you believe she can manage at school and you will help her.
- Volunteer in her classroom; this may help her feel more comfortable.
- Invite your child's new friends over, one at a time.
- If the behaviour does not change in a reasonable amount of time, talk to your child's teacher about other options.

How Does Your Child Learn - Kinesthetic, Auditory, Visual?

Most of us learn in a variety of ways. It is important to watch your child and note the way she learns. The three main ways of learning new information are:

Seeing (visual): A visual learner needs to see how people do things. Written words, pictures and signs help your child to remember.

Hearing (auditory): Auditory learners use their voices and ears to learn. They remember what they hear.

Touching (Kinesthetic): A kinaesthetic child learns best when she acts out a situation, builds things, and touches things.

Create a positive learning environment for your child. Talk to her about school. Encourage her to express his thoughts and ideas. Teach her to think about choices and decisions. Let her know that you love and support her as she deals with the successes and challenges of learning.



Feeding & Nutrition

My Favourite School Lunch

Going to school is lots of fun. At lunch time I like playing with my friends. I also like it best when my lunch box has a small amount of lots of different foods.

I can help you pack my lunch. It's fun to help wash my lunch containers in hot, soapy water. We always make sure we have clean hands before we start. Be sure the counter and utensils are clean too! I can help to wash and scrub the fruits and vegetables. We pack cold foods directly from the refrigerator and add an ice pack to keep my food cold. Make sure that hot foods are steaming hot before putting them into my thermos.

My lunch box gets a passing grade when there is at least one food choice from each of the four food groups. Here are some of my favourite lunch box ideas:

- Pita pocket filled with meat and/or cheese, cold milk and an apple.
- Hot macaroni and cheese, cherry tomatoes, cold milk, melon balls and pumpkin seeds.
- Cheddar cheese slices on half whole grain bagel, zucchini sticks, kiwi and a yogurt.
- Sunflower seeds, cottage cheese, grapes and a small, homemade muffin



Look at What I Can Do!

From 4.5-5.5 years

4.5 years

- I can walk easily along a two inch balance beam.
- I like to gallop and skip.
- I can copy a square, a rectangle and a circle.
- I can dress myself without help.
- I can remember my address and phone number.
- My speech is becoming more clear, my sentences are grammatically correct and others can understand me better.
- I can draw a detailed picture of a person.
- I use the same hand consistently. I may be right OR left handed.
- I hold a pencil between my thumb and middle finger.
- An activity can keep me interested for at least twenty minutes.
- I like to draw letters and numbers.
- I can balance on either foot.
- I enjoy group play and games with rules.
- I am able to ask permission and respect rules.
- I enjoy testing the limits to find out how far you will let me go.
- I ask the meaning of words and enjoy using big words.
- I can hop a long distance.

5.5 years

TOYS

Toys that encourage creativity will appeal to me. I like to build things and take pride in my creations. I also like to help you cook nutritious meals.

Measuring and counting the number of items to add helps me practice math skills. I love to play "I spy". We can have so much fun learning together.

Some great toys are:

- Building sets
- Jigsaw puzzles (make your own)
- Dress-up box
- Skipping ropes
- Two-wheeled bicycle and a helmet
- Simple card games (like "Go Fish" and "Memory")
- Find it" books and picture dictionary
- A plastic bat and ball
- Under your constant supervision, a real hammer, some nails, a real screw driver and screws in a board
- A recording device
- A bug magnifying box, a large magnet





Create Your Own - Make Your Own A, B, C Book

Use old photos, postcards, pictures from magazines. You and your 5 year old can cut up the pictures and glue on each page representing the letters of the alphabet. A is for apple, airplane, Angela. B is for banana, boat, Bobby

When finished have it laminated and spiral bound. Create a lasting treasure.

? For More Information

Best Start Resource Centre
<http://en.beststart.org/resources-and-research>

Ministry of Child & Youth Services - Early Childhood
www.ontario.ca/children

Telehealth Ontario: 1-800-797-0000
24 hours/day

Canadian Paediatric Society: www.caringforkids.cps.ca

Call 211 or visit www.211Ontario.ca

EatRight Ontario: Call 1-800-510-5102
or www.ontario.ca/eatright

To find your local Public Health Unit:

Visit <http://bit.ly/eMtpaw>

Call the INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161

(Toll-free in Ontario only)

or TTY 1-800-387-5559

