

“Look at Me” Threes

What should we be helping children learn before kindergarten? This handout gives some information about your child’s development and learning, based on the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. We include ideas for things you can do with your child—in your daily routines of family life—that will help support your child. You can change them to fit your family’s needs. If you have questions about your child’s development or learning, you can speak with your child’s teacher or doctor.

Approaches to Learning

Preschoolers use play to experiment, figure things out and solve problems. They can work longer on projects, but can get frustrated when things don’t work out.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Play pretend games with your child, and talk about “real” and “pretend.” Let your child be the leader in pretend play, and add some ideas to the play. For example, you can say, “Which animal should I pretend to be?”
- Encourage your child to solve problems, even when her efforts can turn into mistakes. Talk with them about “trying again” when something doesn’t work. Show your child how to handle difficulty and frustration in different ways. When something is hard, you can say, “Oops, that didn’t work, I’ll have to try something else.”

Emotional and Social Development

Preschoolers are learning about themselves and others. They develop friendships with other children, but still turn to adults for affection and help with challenges. Preschoolers understand and show a variety of feelings.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage your child to play with other children. Talk about friendship—yours and hers—and how to be a good friend.
- Talk about feelings with your child. Let him know that people can feel different ways, and that we can use words to describe our feelings. Talk about some ways you can act when we feel certain things. For example, “When we are angry, we can stomp our feet, or say, ‘I’m angry.’ But we cannot hurt others or break things.”

Health and Physical Development

Preschoolers are growing and developing very quickly. They feed themselves. With some help with fasteners, they dress themselves. They climb and explore, and use their bodies to make things happen. Preschoolers can understand rules about health and safety.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods, and teach her to clean up small spills. Teach your child how to take off and put on clothes, and help with the fasteners. Try to leave enough time for your child to help with dressing.
- Encourage your child to try new challenges, such as climbing steps and kicking and throwing balls.
- Teach your child about health and safety and show her how to use healthy and safe behavior, such as washing hands, wearing a seatbelt (car seat), and holding hands in crowded places.

Language Development and Communication

Preschoolers use listening and talking to learn about the world. They talk using longer sentences and include more detail. They ask questions, using “Why”, “How” and “What.” Preschoolers listen to adults reading books, look at pictures, and ask and answer questions. They learn information from listening to books and use scribbles and pictures to “write” in pretend play and writing notes and stories. They may tell you what a scribble means when they write (“Mama, this says ‘I love you.’”), and may begin to use some letters to write their name.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk with your preschooler all the time. Listen and answer questions. Ask questions and introduce new words. Talk about things that are important in your family, such as special holidays or events and daily routines.
- Try to read picture books every day. Read the words on the page – or make some up. Talk about the pictures, ask questions, and talk about the story. Re-read favorite stories, and ask your child to tell what will happen next. Read different kinds of books – rhyming, information (books about facts, like planes and animals), and stories.
- When you are writing—notes or lists—let your child “write” with pencil/crayons next to you. Show children how you use what you write. For example, write a grocery list together, and then read the list at the store together. Write a birthday card to a friend or family member, but remember that your preschooler’s writing may look like scribbles to you.
- Whatever your home language, continue to use it at home and in your community. Learning two languages is good for a child’s brain development.

Cognitive Development

Preschoolers play and explore and question to learn. They ask questions and experiment to find answers and learn about new things. Preschoolers use their senses to enjoy art, music, dance and drama. They can count 5 objects, and talk about *more* and *less*, *bigger*, *smaller*, and *same*.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk with your child about “making decisions” and “solving problems.” Help him to think about more than one way to do something: “We could use a cup to fill this bucket with water. Is there another way we could fill the bucket?” (with the hose, from the faucet, etc.)
- Your family can visit museums, churches, schools, parks and even local businesses that may have free music, art, drama and dancing for your family to watch and join. You can also turn on some music in your home and dance and sing.
- Count and measure things in your daily routines: “How many cups of water will fill this bowl,” or “Let’s count how many cars are parked on this street.”