

# tips

for turning  
everyday activities  
into learning activities

talk  
listen  
read  
play

Getting ready for school  
begins at birth

# success

## childhood experiences

Success in school is built on the experiences a child has from birth to age 5 – before he enters kindergarten.



**Parents are the key** to their child's success in school.

Everything you do with your child – from the day he is born – helps him get ready for success in life and in school.

**When you hold and comfort your baby**, you are helping him feel safe so that he can develop the confidence he will need to explore and learn in school.

**When you play with your child**, you are helping him develop the social skills, curiosity, and reasoning that are important in school.

**When you talk to your child**, you are helping him learn new words and ideas that will be used in school.

You can do many things right now that will help your child develop the skills he needs to succeed in school. It's easy; it's fun; and it doesn't take extra money. Just use this book to turn your everyday activities into learning activities for your child. It's another way to show your love.

# share

## social and personal skills

A child must have social and personal skills to **get along with other people**, to **have self-respect**, and to **believe he can learn and succeed in school**.



## Help your child learn social and personal skills:

- ❑ **Comfort your baby** when he cries. Hug and praise your child often. Your child will learn to love and trust you and others. This will help him get along with teachers and other children.
- ❑ **Encourage your child** as he learns new skills like walking, eating, and talking. Teach and offer support, but don't take over what your child is doing.
- ❑ **Share chores.** Show how it is done, and then let your child help you set the table, sort laundry, and do other simple jobs. Praise his efforts even if the result is not perfect. This will help your child develop self-confidence.
- ❑ **Show by example** how to control feelings like anger. Help your child learn that others have feelings, too.

# Learn

## language and literacy skills

A child must have language and literacy skills to **speak, listen, read, and write.**



**Help your child learn** language and literacy skills:

- ☐ **Talk with your child from the day she is born.** Even as a baby, your child is learning the sounds and rhythm of language. Take turns talking. When your baby babbles, say something back.
- ☐ **Sing songs** to help your child learn both words and rhythm.
- ☐ **Teach what words mean.** Say, "This is a spoon," when you are teaching your child to eat with one.
- ☐ **Play word games.** Name all the words you can that start with the same letter, like "boy, banana, bird, big." Name words that rhyme, like "lock, rock, sock."
- ☐ **Read with your child every day.** Ask your child questions as you read together. Ask about the pictures and what may happen next.
- ☐ **Give your child crayons and paper** to draw on.
- ☐ **Let your child speak for herself.** Don't rush in to speak for her.
- ☐ **Visit your local public library** which has books and free programs for all ages.



# mathematical thinking **solve**

A child needs mathematical thinking skills **to count and to solve problems that use numbers, sizes, or shapes.**



**Help your child learn** mathematical thinking:

- ☐ **Count out loud** in everyday routines. Count your child's toes as you bathe her, the buttons as you dress her, and the number of steps as you walk.
- ☐ **Talk about size and shape.** Help your child learn the meaning of "big" and "small." Point out shapes of common objects – the ball is round; the box is square.
- ☐ **Use words** like "over," "under," and "below."
- ☐ **Play with puzzles and blocks.** Putting parts together will help your child learn to solve problems.
- ☐ **Teach your child what a pattern is.** Ask your child what comes next in a pattern of blocks or a string of beads.

# explore

## scientific thinking

A child needs scientific thinking skills to **make decisions and solve problems**. To build these skills, a child needs to **explore, ask questions, and think about possible answers**.



## Help your child learn scientific thinking:

- ☐ **Go for walks often**, in summer, fall, winter, and spring.
- ☐ **Encourage curiosity**. Ask your child to tell you about things you see, hear, and smell on your walk.
- ☐ **Touch and talk** about stones, leaves, puddles, and flowers. Encourage your child to look closely and notice details.
- ☐ **Talk about changes** in the seasons and the weather.
- ☐ **Teach how to use tools** like rulers and measuring cups. Show how tall your child is by using a measuring tape.
- ☐ **Explore foods**.
  - Talk about foods. Explain where milk comes from. Tell how apples grow on trees but carrots grow underground.
  - Teach how water becomes ice or steam.
- ☐ **Go to the library** often.
  - Check out books to learn more about birds, animals, and plants.
  - Teach your child how to use a computer.

# interact

## social studies

A child needs social studies skills to **learn about her community** and to **get along with different types of people**.



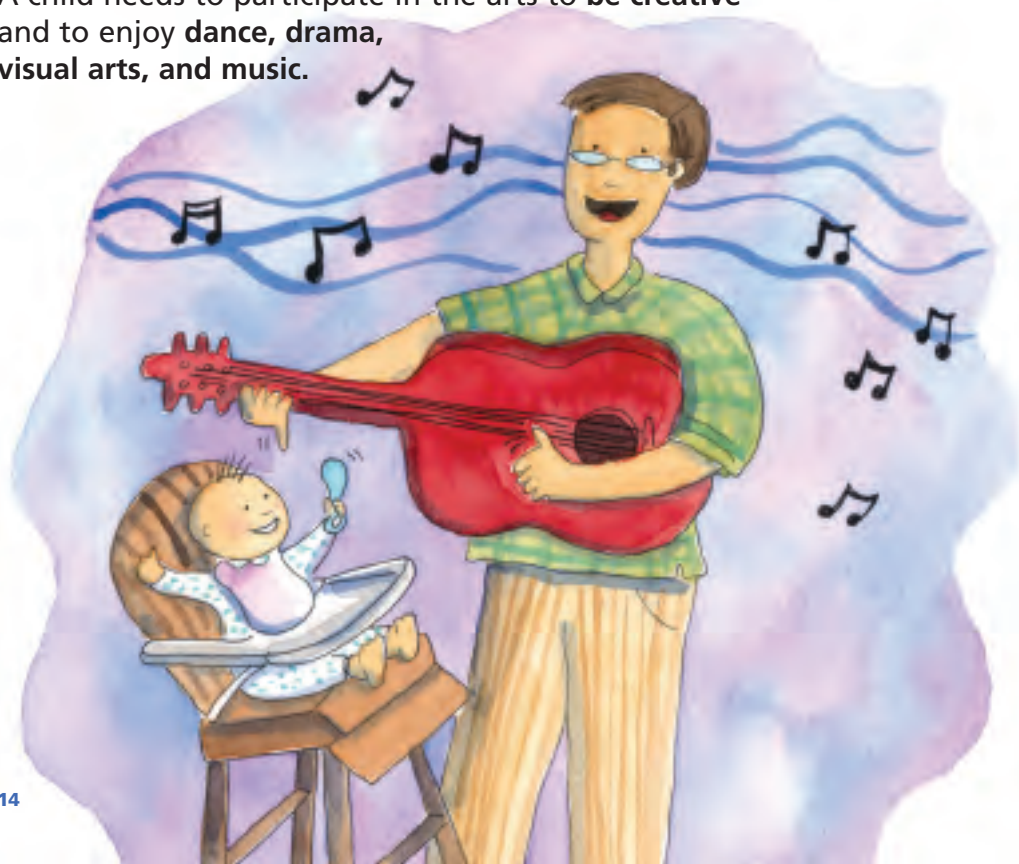
**Help your child learn** social studies:

- ☐ **Talk about families.** How are they alike and how are they different?
  - Read a book about people from different cultures.
  - Make a picture book about your family.
- ☐ **Talk about jobs.** What do teachers, doctors, mailmen, and policemen do?
- ☐ **Visit stores** like supermarkets and talk about what they sell and why.
- ☐ **Talk about rules**, like bedtime, sharing chores, and wearing a seatbelt.
- ☐ **Volunteer with your child** at a community event, like a neighborhood cleanup.
- ☐ **Visit interesting places** such as the library, a museum, or park.

## the arts

# create

A child needs to participate in the arts to **be creative** and to enjoy **dance, drama, visual arts, and music.**



**Help your child learn** to enjoy the arts:

- ☐ **Make music together.** Sing, clap out rhythms, or use wooden spoons and pots to make music.
- ☐ **Dance together** to many different types of music.
- ☐ **Create together.** Let your child use paste, crayons, paints, and playdough often. Art helps him use his imagination, and he will learn about colors and shapes. Painting and drawing now will help him be ready to write when he goes to kindergarten.
- ☐ **Go to a museum.** Talk about the paintings you see.
- ☐ **Attend dance and music concerts.** Watch for free events in your community.



# physical development and health move

Your child needs physical development and health skills **to walk, run, draw, write and to stay safe and healthy.**



**Help your child with physical development and health skills:**

- ☐ **Make large muscles strong.**
  - Play ball together. Catch, kick, and throw.
  - Pretend to be animals that hop, jump, fly, or crawl.
- ☐ **Make small muscles strong.**
  - Let your child color, draw, paste, and paint. Preschoolers can learn to cut with safety scissors.
  - Let your child feed herself with her fingers, spoon, and fork.
- ☐ **Let your child dress herself,** even if it takes extra time.
  - Teach your preschooler to tie a bow.
- ☐ **Teach good health habits.**
  - Teach and talk about washing hands.
  - Teach and talk about brushing and flossing teeth.
  - Eat healthy meals together and talk about what you are eating.

## Learning at home and away from home

Children learn skills and self-confidence from experiences at home, at child care, in Head Start or preschool – wherever there is a loving environment with learning activities.

If your child will need child care, look for a provider who is warm and supportive. Be sure activities are right for your child at each age and stage of development.

**A free service called LOCATE: Child Care is available to help you find child care that meets your needs.** LOCATE can help you evaluate the quality of care and also learn about the Child Care Subsidy Program, which **helps parents pay for child care.**

### LOCATE: Child Care has an office serving each region:

Anne Arundel County	(410) 222-1728
Baltimore City	(410) 539-2209
Baltimore County	(410) 288-5600
Chesapeake (Upper Shore) (Kent, Queen Anne's, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline)	(888) 406-1453
Frederick/Carroll Counties	(301) 695-4508 (877) 230-7422
Harford/Cecil Counties	(888) 244-5383
Howard County	(410) 313-1930
Lower Shore (Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester)	(410) 548-3279
Montgomery County	(240) 777-3130
Prince George's County	(301) 772-8400
Southern Maryland (Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's)	(866) 290-0045 or (301) 290-0045 in St. Mary's County
Western Maryland (Allegany, Garrett, Washington)	(301) 733-6914 or (800) 924-9188 in Allegany and Garrett Counties

LOCATE: Child Care is available Monday through Friday, generally from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Call your local child care resource center, listed above, to confirm the hours for your region.

## Milestones: Is my child developing normally?

Parents may wonder if their child is developing at a normal, healthy pace. Maybe he seems late starting to talk or early starting to crawl. What's normal anyway?

Although all children develop at their own speed, milestones have been established that can help parents know if their child's development is within the expected range.

# help

### Parents can get free lists of developmental milestones:

- "Growth and Developmental Milestones: A guide to development in young children birth to age three." **Go to [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)** and enter the title in the search box. Or to request a free copy, call 410-767-0261.
- "Learn the Signs. Act Early" Parent Resource Kit. (Milestones from birth to age 5). **Go to [www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly)** or call 1-800-CDC-INFO to request the Parent Resource Kit.



### Help is available.

If you have concerns about your young child's development, talk to his health care provider. If you still have questions, call the Maryland Infants and Toddlers/Preschool Services Program at **1-800-535-0182**. If your child is under the age of three, you will be referred to your local Infants and Toddlers Program which provides services to children with developmental delays and their families. If your child is age three through five, you will be referred to the Child Find program of your local school system. Services are provided at no cost if your child is eligible for these programs.



**Countdown to Kindergarten** is a statewide project involving many organizations, public school systems, libraries, and others working to ensure that all Maryland's young children have nurturing experiences and arrive at school ready to succeed.

Visit [www.countdownMD.org](http://www.countdownMD.org) for:

- information on activities and services in your community.
- more information on school readiness.

**To order copies of this *Tips* booklet:**

- This booklet is available free of charge to parents and service providers in Maryland. To order copies (in English or Spanish), go to [www.countdownMD.org](http://www.countdownMD.org) or call 1-866-752-1614.
- Fifteen other languages are available for downloading from the Countdown To Kindergarten website, [www.countdownMD.org](http://www.countdownMD.org).

**Countdown to Kindergarten:**

**Learning Begins at Birth**

Maryland's Early Childhood Public

Engagement Campaign

608 Water Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

[www.countdownMD.org](http://www.countdownMD.org)

This printing funded by



Understanding what's important.®

CTK thanks Countdown to Kindergarten: Boston for the use of the CTK logo.

© 2007 Maryland Committee for Children  
Illustrations: © 2007 Bonnie Matthews