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# Parent Times

March 2014

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north central parenting group





# Ready for Kindergarten?

Five teachers tell you what preschoolers really need for next year. [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

If your child's preschool years are coming to an end, your thoughts are probably turning toward kindergarten. But is your child ready to move on to the "big" school? What skills do kindergarten teachers expect their new students to have? To help answer those questions (and ease your mind), we've asked highly regarded kindergarten teachers from around the country to share their insights on helping your child gain the right mix of kindergarten-readiness skills.

The skill sets they are looking for might surprise you. Because of the national focus on improving education and meeting standards, you might think that it's most important for children to enter kindergarten knowing their ABCs, numbers, shapes, and colors so they can keep up with the curriculum. While teachers would love children to come in with some letter and number recognition, they don't want you to drill your kids on academic skills. There are equally — if not more — important readiness skills that set the stage for your child's learning. Raising an eager learner is the goal, and it can be achieved easily through play and day-to-day activities. What follows are the top readiness skills that kindergarten teachers look for:

## Enthusiasm Toward Learning

"I look for those qualities that prime children to be successful in school," says Kim Hughes. Does the child approach learning enthusiastically? Is she eager to explore and discover? Does she ask questions, take initiative, and persist when tasks are difficult?

"Parents can set aside a little time each day to investigate the world with their preschooler and answer those endless questions," says Sandra Waite-Stupiansky. As you drive or walk along in the park, point out your child's surroundings — the different trees or the various birds at the feeder. Demonstrate how things work. "You'll help your child develop beginning science skills — the ability to form a hypothesis, test it out, and come up with new questions and theories," Waite-Stupiansky explains. "The more kids notice, the more curious they'll become. And we'll be building on that curiosity in kindergarten."

## Solid Oral-Language Skills

"Children need wide background knowledge about their world and the words to go with it," says Lisa Mosier. "I want to know where they've been and what they can talk about." You can help build language skills by taking your child to many new places and giving him words and descriptions for what he is seeing. At the zoo, explain, "There's a tiger. See how he has stripes and looks different from the lion?" Mosier says these experiences have a huge impact on literacy. "If you're reading a book about zoo animals and it says 'Look at the tiger,' and you can't tell the difference between a lion and a tiger, then you won't have the background knowledge to help you tackle the word. When children come to words that they don't know, they won't be able to make a good guess because it isn't in their vocabulary."

Research shows that one of the best predictors of later reading success is a well-developed oral vocabulary in kindergarten. "PreK kids are learning vocabulary at the rate of five to six words a day," says Waite-Stupiansky. "It's just amazing how they will retain words if you use them several times in context and conversation."

## The Ability to Listen

Children's literature is a rich resource for expanding language. "We expect parents to be reading to kids every day," says Jayne C. Isaacs. "I can tell which children have been glued to the TV or computer for hours at a time. When we read them a story and ask them to tell us in their own words what they liked or remembered, they're unable to do so." Besides fostering vocabulary and comprehension, reading develops the attention skills necessary in a kindergarten classroom. "Listening is a key part of school behavior," Isaacs notes. Students must be able to concentrate on what the teacher is saying, listen carefully for directions, and tune in to the sounds in letters and words.

*(continued on pg. 3)*



## President's Corner

Spring is here and children seem to respond intuitively with their own version of "spring fever" — an urge to get outside and move! Go with this energy and soak up that springtime fresh air before our weather gets too hot. Now is the perfect time to enjoy the Phoenix Zoo and Desert Botanical Gardens, a walk in your neighborhood, time at the park, a spring training baseball game, and our **Family Spring Event** which will be held on Saturday, March 8 at All Saints' Episcopal Day School.

Spring also brings deadlines for children's school enrollment, narrowing down Summer Camp options, and planning summer vacations. If you are struggling, like many of us have been, the decisions will come to you. Try to base your decisions on what is best for you and your family and know that NCPG members always have each other for ideas and advice.

In a few weeks, we will be approving our **2014-2015 Board of Directors** slate. ***There are still positions available which we hope you will consider.*** Being on the NCPG Board is truly a fun and rewarding experience. Your time and talent are needed!

Kori Shapiro,  
*NCPG President 2013-2014*

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*NCPG is a non-profit, non-denominational organization  
providing classes to parents of infant to pre-school age children.*

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## Parent Times

Members, this monthly newsletter is for YOUR benefit, so we want to ensure our team is publishing content that is valuable, useful, informative, and fun! We don't want this to be something that gets lost in your stack of mail. Please let us know if you have suggestions, comments, concerns, or any input that would help us to improve this publication. Thanks for your help!

**Editors** – Sarah Frey and Carlie Garcia

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## On the Cover

Connor Frey was photographed at his Nana and Papa's farm by Alyssa Hagan of Three Little Birds Photography.  
[www.thethreelittlebirdsphotography.com](http://www.thethreelittlebirdsphotography.com)

"The more animated you are as you read, the better you'll focus your child's attention on what she's hearing," says Armando Argandona. Use different voices for the characters. Promote critical thinking by asking questions like, "Why do you think that happened?" and "How would you feel if that happened to you?" and "What do you think will happen next?" Engage kids by inviting them to clap or stomp when they hear a rhyming word, and letting them finish sentences in familiar stories. Books with rhyme and repetitive refrains (like those by Mother Goose and Dr. Seuss) help kids predict what's coming and detect consonant sounds at the beginning and end of words, which fosters phonemic awareness—the ability to hear and break down the subtle sounds in words. Your child won't be able to read the word "cat" until she understands that it actually has three sounds: "cuh," "ah," and "tuh."

Singing fosters pre-reading skills too. "Take turns substituting new sounds in nursery rhymes and songs," suggests Mosier. For example, transform "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" to "Dinkle Dinkle Dittle Dar" or "Zippety Doo Da" to "Bibbety Boo Bah."

## The Desire to Be Independent

Encouraging self-help skills is an important step to preparing your child for kindergarten. "It's amazing how many kids come to kindergarten not knowing how to hang up a jacket," says Argandona. It might be quicker for you to do it, but "independence is critical for helping your child adjust to school," he emphasizes. Teachers expect children to:

- Get coats on and off and hang them up
- Follow simple two-step instructions such as "take off your boots and put on your sneakers"
- Go to the bathroom and wash their hands
- Blow their nose and cover their mouth when they cough
- Fasten and unfasten simple buttons and snaps
- Eat neatly and pour into a cup
- Open up a juice box and get the straw in.

"Some children are so dependent on their parents that they expect the teacher to do these things for them," says Hughes. "But when you have 20-plus kids in the room, it's hard to worry about wiping noses!" However, she notes that tying shoes is a developmental skill that often doesn't come until the first grade. If kids can't yet tie their shoes, Hughes suggests sending them in slip-ons or sneakers with Velcro fasteners.

## The Ability to Play Well with Others

Your child will need your assistance refining essential social skills such as sharing, compromising, turn-taking, and problem-solving. "Children are naturally egocentric at this age, and we don't expect them to be able to share everything," says Waite-

# The Debate Over Redshirting

*Adapted from: MotherJones.com*

In this era of hypercompetitive parenting, more families are choosing to delay their children's entry into kindergarten, under the impression that the kids will have an academic and social advantage. In fact, a 2008 study by Harvard researchers claims that since the late 1960s, the number of six-year-olds in first grade has dropped by 9 percent because they are increasingly likely to be enrolled in kindergarten.

No one disputes the immediate results of "redshirting," a phrase borrowed from the sports world. Six-year-olds categorically test better than five-year-olds in kindergarten, and they enjoy greater social and physical maturity that helps them make friends and win at tag. But there's a growing debate about the effectiveness of redshirting in the long term—not only for the kids held back, but for their peers, as well.

There are several factors at play here, including the traditional wisdom, backed up by research, that shows little boys to be particularly fidgety in kindergarten. That said, the most striking disparity is also the most worrying. Like private school, redshirting is most prevalent among white, Asian, and relatively wealthy families. For families earning the least in this country, redshirting is cost-prohibitive. As higher-income families delay their kids' kindergarten entry, children from lower-income families end up "competing" against older and more-prepared classmates—at a crucial time for learning and development.

What's more, a growing body of research suggests that redshirted kids might not enjoy benefits over the long run, anyway. A 2007 paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research argues that "contrary to much academic and popular discussion of school entry age—being old relative to one's peers is not beneficial."

Until more-conclusive research emerges, well-meaning parents are likely to continue redshirting their children. And depending on the individual child, that could be the right choice. But as Harvard researcher David Deming says, it's crucial that parents "make a decision with the whole life course in mind."





Stupiansky. "But by the time they reach kindergarten, they should be able to express their feelings in words and begin to understand that two people can use the same thing at the same time."

If you and your child are building with blocks and he reaches for one you're using, Hughes suggests you first encourage your child to ask, "May I have the block?" Then model sharing by saying something like, "I'm glad to share my block with you." When you notice your child sharing with others, celebrate it by saying, "I'm so proud of you. It's really hard to share your favorite doll, but you were able to do it. Good for you!"

On play dates and park outings, stay within earshot so you can help kids problem-solve when conflict occurs, Hughes recommends. If your son gets in a power struggle over a toy and can't seem to work it out, step in and say, "It looks like we're having a problem here. What can we do about it?" Encourage him to come up with possible solutions, offering your own suggestions, if necessary. "Help kids understand the feelings of others," says Hughes. "I want them to know when a friend is sad by looking at her face and seeing that her mouth is frowning or her eyes are crying." This nurtures compassion and empathy, values that are prized by kindergarten teachers.

## Strong Fine-Motor Skills

Your child's hands must be strong enough to master coloring, cutting, pasting, and holding a pencil — fine-motor tasks that kids use every day in kindergarten. "By week one, we're already writing a letter of the alphabet," says Argandona. "If kids can't hold the pencil correctly, they will fall behind."

To hold the pencil the right way, kids need to develop the small muscles in their palms and fingers. Hughes suggests giving your child a pipe cleaner and some Cheerios (or similar, colorful cereal) to make bracelets. "It requires you to pinch with your fingers," she explains, the same motion needed for grasping a pencil. Or ask your preschooler to mist your houseplants with a spray bottle, an activity that boosts both writing and scissor skills. Scribbling in clay with fingers is a fun alternative to doing it on paper and especially helpful for kids who are resistant to writing and drawing. (A child can practice cutting the clay into small strips too.)

"Offer writing utensils in a variety of sizes and shapes," advises Hughes. "Some people think that fat pencils are easier to hold, but that's not always true. For a child with weak hands, a smaller, shorter pencil might be easier to manage."



## NCPG to Offer Kindergarten Class Next Year!

The NCPG Board of Directors is excited to share that a kindergarten class will be added for the 2014-2015 year. There has been great interest from members of the Pre-K class. And, there is room for more so please spread news to any moms who will have children in kindergarten next school year.

## Basic Letter and Number Recognition

Kindergarten teachers believe that it is their responsibility to teach kids letter sounds and how to write, but they do hope incoming students can recognize most letters by sight. They also hope children can count to 10, identify numbers 1 to 5, and know some shapes and colors.

But teachers don't want you to quiz your child or use workbooks, flashcards, or phonics kits. "So much learning can happen without quizzing or sitting down with a pencil," says Isaacs. The lessons unfold naturally as you and your child sort Legos by color or shape. Your daughter practices counting as she doles out pretend cookies for the dolls in her tea party. Your son builds letter recognition while scrambling alphabet magnets on the fridge.

"Every outing is a spontaneous opportunity to learn," Isaacs adds. Play guessing games like, "I spy with my little eye something with the number 3."

Teach by "immersion" and "show kids how letters are all around us," says Mosier. "Say, 'Hey, that sign spells Target. Let's spell it together. T-A-R-G-E-T.'" Point out objects that contain the letters in your child's name.

Most important, always keep the focus on fun. "Relax, and enjoy your children," Mosier says. "Read, play, and go places. And talk the whole time you're doing it!"



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# On the Nightstand Book Review

Title: *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*

Author: Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D.

Reviewed by: Amy Morin Source: About.com

If you've ever heard a parent say to a child who isn't behaving "One...two...", then you've probably heard of *1-2-3 Magic*. There's a good chance you might have even picked up on this method yourself, without ever actually even picking up the book.

*1-2-3 Magic* provides parents with an excellent guide to effective discipline strategies. It helps parents understand the basic types of discipline and offers a brief explanation for the underlying theories about why the program works. It offers a great overview to discipline while also providing information on how to target some of the most common behavior problems.

It also covers how to use the program throughout your child's development, right through the tween years. While many programs lose effectiveness, *1-2-3 Magic* can grow along with your child and be used for many years.

The premise of the book is based on a fairly simple concept. It encourages parents to give directions more effectively and to reduce the amount of arguing, nagging and pleading to get kids to be compliant. Kids are told to do something and if they don't comply, parents start counting. If the child hasn't complied by the time the parent reaches the number three, the child is given a negative consequence, such as time out.

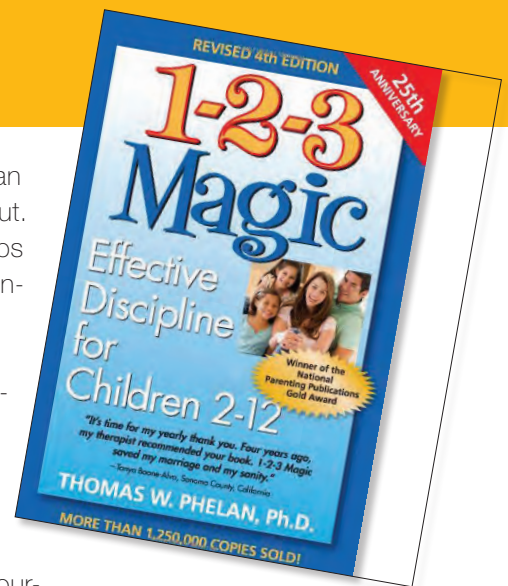
Of course, when kids exhibit certain behavior, such as aggressive behavior, they aren't given three opportunities to hit before they are given a time out. Instead, those be-

haviors result in an automatic time out. The program helps parents make consequences more effective while reducing manipulative behavior, such as whining and begging.

The program doesn't just discourage negative behavior. Instead, it also encourages good behavior through the use of praise. It also promotes the use of natural consequences, in addition to time out. The program shows parents how to use discipline to teach life skills, such as problem-solving skills.

Readers are encouraged to get all caregivers on board with the program. When a child has a behavior management plan that is consistent among caregivers and different environments, it is much more likely to be effective in changing behavior.

Overall, *1-2-3 Magic* is likely to save parents lots of energy and increase the effectiveness of their discipline. It's also likely to help kids learn new skills and to reduce a lot of behavior problems. It's likely to be effective with many children with special needs, including kids with ADHD.



## St. Patty's Craft: Fruit Loop's Rainbow

OneArtsyMama.com

Nothing too complex here! This project requires:

- 1 box of Fruit Loops cereal
- Cotton balls, glue, and craft paper.

Have fun helping your child sort the different colored Fruit Loops, and maybe tie snack-time into craft-time too!





# 'Families Giving Back' to Receive Proceeds from Corks for Kids

The NCPG Board of Directors has selected Families Giving Back, a Phoenix-based non-profit founded by NCPG alumnae Alex Sklar and Lisa Geyser, to receive a portion of the proceeds from NCPG's April 26 Corks for Kids fundraiser.



Alex and Lisa met in Infant I after the births of their sons. Their families grew along with their involvement in NCPG. When they "aged-out" of NCPG, they sought volunteer opportunities in which they could include their children. However, after searching endlessly for family-friendly volunteer activities, they couldn't find any that would allow for young children.

"While we understood the challenges of working with young children, we believed there had to be a way to create volunteer opportunities that would be mutually beneficial to an organization and the volunteer families," explained Alex. "We also knew we weren't alone. Many of our friends with kids also expressed an interest in volunteering as a family. So, we decided to create Families Giving Back to fill this need."

The group coordinates with local nonprofits to organize events where parents and their children can work together. For example, Families Giving Back recently hosted a book drive collection at Homeward Bound, a local shelter for families in need. Volunteer families were invited to bring gently used books and the kids helped sort and box up over 3500 books. The volunteer families were also invited to participate in a story time with the families staying at the shelter. After the event volunteer families toured the facility and learned more about the organization.

On February 22, Families Giving Back hosted a community "Loom with Love" Loom-A-Thon, a daylong Rainbow Loom event where more than 400 volunteers made loom bracelets for the children at Phoenix Children Hospital. "The event was so great not only for our own families, but for PCH. They have not been able to offer family friendly volunteer opportunities on-site due to age restrictions. We were able to come in and create an event that worked within their guidelines and offered families a way to give back to the patients at PCH. They were very supportive and excited to work with us!" said Lisa.

NCPG families can find family-focused volunteer opportunities at:

[familiesgivingback.org](http://familiesgivingback.org)



## RSVP for Corks for Kids to support both NCPG and Families Giving Back.

The North Central Parenting Group's annual fundraiser and auction will take place at the Phoenix Country Club on Saturday, April 26 at 6:00pm.

Secure your sitter now for this event. Invitations will be mailed and tickets go on sale March 15. RSVP for Corks for Kids to support both NCPG and Families Giving Back.

**Volunteers are needed to help secure auction items and ensure the evening runs smoothly. To lend support, please contact Erica Brown, Caroline Keating and Julie Christensen at [fundraising@ncpgaz.org](mailto:fundraising@ncpgaz.org)**

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- Organization and Home Services
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# New Arrivals!



Please welcome these recent additions to our NCPG family!



**Brooks August Henline**

October 5, 2013

Weight: 9 pounds, 13 ounces

Length: 21 inches

Parents: Marcus and Kendra



**Jack Allen Kenkel**

November 17, 2013

Weight: 7 pounds, 5 ounces

Length: 20 inches

Parents: Kendra Flory and Kyle



**Brooklyn Kate Kasalek**

November 30, 2013

Weight: 7 pounds

Length: 19 inches

Parents: Carl and Amy



**Jameson Ann Hatton**

December 2, 2013

Weight: 6 pounds, 14 ounces

Length: 19.5 inches

Big Sister: Julia

Parents: Janelle and Jim



**Ryan Conley Ragland**

December 20, 2013

Weight: 7 pounds, 6 ounces

Length: 21.5 inches

Big Brother: Brooks (3 yrs)

Parents: Mike and Jordan



## Musicology Visits the Pre-Infant Class

NCPG sponsor Musicology visited Pre-Infant on February 19. Moms and babies had loads of fun while also learning a thing or two. According to Musicologyaz.org, music is the one activity that lights up all areas of the brain. When a baby is first born her brain is only 25 percent wired for how she will learn, and by age 3 her brain is 90 percent wired. Research shows that exposure to specific types of musical activities wires the brain for language, reading, math, and motor skills while nurturing emotional and social development.



# Things to Do in March



## Tumbleweed Tots — Mar. 25, 9:00 a.m.

Where: Tumbleweed Recreation Center, 745 E Germann Road, Chandler, AZ 85286

What: This indoor play area is designed for children 5 years of age and under to play under parental/guardian supervision. This fun, safe and clean area will have plenty of toys, equipment and activities that are sure to keep the kids entertained. There is a maximum of four children per adult. Fee included in all TRC family passes. Fee: \$2.00 for residents, \$3.00 for non residents



## Tempe Festival for the Arts — Mar. 28-30, 10:00 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.

Where: Mill Ave. between 3rd St. and University Dr. in Tempe.

What: As many as 400 artist booths line Mill Avenue and the surrounding streets presenting unique and hand-made artwork that offers visitors a distinctive shopping experience. In addition to the festival stage, street performers, food and beverage vendors, sponsor exhibits, and entertainment booths are set up for the amusement of festival visitors. There is also the Kids Innovation Station which provides hands-on visual art education for children.



## Spring Training — Feb. 26-Mar. 29

Where: Scottsdale Stadium, 7408 E. Osborn Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

What: The 2014 Cactus League season features 15 major league teams and more than 220 games. There's never an off day, and the longest "road trip" between stadiums is 45 minutes. Visit [www.cactusleague.com](http://www.cactusleague.com) for schedules and pricing.



## McDowell Mountain Music Festival — Mar. 28-30

Where: Margaret T. Hance Park, 1202 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004

What: The Festival took off in April of 2004 as an endeavor to bring real music back to Arizona while getting the community together for a great cause: our children. Each year, the festival brings together a number of bands from a wide variety of genres from all over the world to Arizona. Children under the age of 10 receive free admission. Tickets and the band line up can be found at [www.mmmf.com](http://www.mmmf.com)



## Just for Kids- Sonoran Stories — Mar. 14, 9:00 a.m.

Where: San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W Phillips Road, Queen Creek, AZ

What: Bring your imagination and your smiles for an epic journey into Sonoran Story-land. You'll learn about the amazing plants and animals that live in our beautiful Sonoran. Then you'll go out for a short nature walk on the trail. Parents, feel free to bring snacks and water. Please wear closed-toe shoes, hat, and bring water. Join Ranger Tish inside the Nature Center

## Story Time at Barnes & Noble at Kierland Commons — Mar. 8, 3:00 p.m.

Where: 7030 E. Greenway Parkway Suite 150, Scottsdale, AZ 85254

What: Story time lead by staff to help in the encouragement of early reading.



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# 5 Things Every Mom Wants to Hear

Babble.com and Huffingtonpost.com

It's already spring, and although you've probably already broken all of your New Year's resolutions, you can still redeem yourself — by complimenting a fellow mom. Whether she's a friend, co-worker or acquaintance, chances are she doesn't hear enough how fabulous she is.

## *"My kids love your kids."*

Moms have finely honed B.S.-detectors, so there is no sense in lobbing out an "I love your outfit!" at a woman wearing yoga pants and the nutritious half of her child's lunch. But telling a mother that your kids love her kids is one of those wonderful sneaky compliments disguised as a fact - a fact she can feel glowy about. There is, snuck in there, praise for her parenting, love for her children, and a promise of friendship.

## *"You don't look tired."*

When you're sleep-deprived, the last thing you need is to be self-conscious about looking tired in addition to feeling utterly exhausted. Don't mention her shirt is on inside out or that she only put makeup on one eye and not the other (unless it's something she can actually fix as soon as you tell her) and you can count yourself among her real friends. Sometimes a little white lie - or saying nothing at all - is the biggest compliment.

## *"You rock for doing it all."*

Chances are she has felt like a failure at some point for trying to do it all and falling flat on her face. Something's got to give.

It just does. No mom is capable of caring for her kids, working, cooking, maintaining a home, nurturing a marriage, and (heaven forbid) trying to have some semblance of a life simultaneously and successfully. But the fact that she even tries and succeeds sometimes deserves massive props. Give them to her. Now.

## *"The same thing happened to me."*

If there's one thing to be learned from the preponderance of mom blogs, it's that surviving motherhood with your sanity intact involves connecting with other women who are going through the same thing. Nothing can make a mother feel any better about her kid's ballet-recital freak-out or the way she lost it at the twins when they were horsing around in the mall parking lot -- nothing, that is, except another mother saying, "I know, I get it; we've all been there." And, most of all: "It's not your fault."

## *"It gets easier."*

When my kids were 1 and 3 and both screaming their heads off at the park one day, a mother chasing her kids on scooters sashayed by and called out, "Don't worry! You're at the hardest part right now!" My heart swelled with love for her. Lady, whoever you are: a thousand thanks! We all know, of course, that being a mom never actually gets easy. But it really helps to know that those eternal difficult afternoons your kids put you through (at every age) are normal, are not your fault, and are worth every second. Which is why every mother should get a guardian angel who whispers in her ear (at every stage): "It gets easier. Soon."



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# NCPG Mom To Meet

## Elise Pace

### Spouse

Lincoln Pace.

### Children

Ava (4 1/2) Tatum (2 1/2) Mia (4 Months).

### Born, Raised & Lived

Born in Lansing, Michigan and moved to Scottsdale in 2004 and have been here ever since.

### Career or Previous Career

Full-time Mom.

### Non-mother Hobby

I love to hike.

### 5 Words to Describe Yourself

Patient, Unselfish, Loving, Fun, and Creative.

### Favorite Vacation Spot

Manhattan Beach, California.

### Favorite Adult Spot to Dine in Town

City Hall.

### Favorite Children's Book to Read

*Love You Forever.*

### Favorite Family Hangout

Park or the Pool.

### Rules to Mother By

Be Patient, Be Kind, and Be Loving. I always want my daughters to feel that they can talk to me about anything.

### Most Meaningful Mom Moment

I would have to say the first time my daughters told me they loved me.... it makes my heart melt every time!

### Best Mothering Advice Given to You

I really love Barbs advice on starting your day in "Love Mode." This really can help not only you but your whole family have a happy stress free day.

### Best Thing Learned in Class this Year

Discipline means to teach, not to punish. Also, not to take your children's verbal out lashes personally.

# Cooking With Kids



## Easiest Pasta and Broccoli Recipe

Gina's Weight Watcher Recipes, Skinnytaste.com

**Serves:** 6    **Hands-On Time:** 15 minutes    **Total Time:** 15 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 12 oz uncooked pasta
- 6 1/2 cups fresh broccoli florets, no stems
- 5 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan or Romano
- 2 tbsp olive oil, divided
- salt and fresh cracked pepper

### Directions:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. When water boils, add pasta and broccoli at the same time and cook according to pasta instructions for al dente. When pasta is almost done cooking, reserve about 1 cup of the pasta water and set aside. Drain pasta and broccoli

Return the pot to the stove and set heat to high; add 1 tbsp olive oil, when hot, add garlic. Cook until golden, reduce flame to low and add pasta back to the pot.

Mix well, add remaining olive oil, grated cheese, salt and pepper to taste mixing well and smashing any large pieces of broccoli to break up.

Add 1/2 cup of reserved pasta water and mix well adding more if needed.

Serve in pasta bowls with additional grated cheese on the side.

*\*Add cooked, diced chicken breast if desired.*



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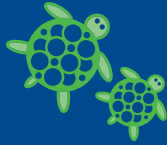
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## End Mealtime Battles Forever With These 5 Simple Words

By Maryann Jacobsen, Huffingtonpost.com

It's dinnertime and my 4-year-old son is deep in play. When I announce that dinner is ready he makes his own announcement: "I don't want to eat, Mommy."

I tell him five words that avoid the food battle that he wants me to engage in: **"YOU DON'T HAVE TO EAT."**

This is the rule in our house but it is followed by a second rule that everyone follows, regardless of wanting to eat or not. I tell him that family dinners are about being with family, and not just eating, so we all have to sit at the table.

Nine times out of 10, once he sits, he eats at least some of the food on his plate.

### Why avoiding food battles is so important.

My problem with food battles is that there is a winner and a loser. If the parent wins then the child loses, and if the child wins they hold all the cards. Both situations are not beneficial!

When we make eating about the parent's will versus the child's will, the joy and connection of eating gets lost. Some parents may win the battle and feel good that their child eats the way they want them to eat, but deep down the child may be full of resentment, eating peas to please his parents and not because he enjoys eating them.

In fact, a 2008 study published in Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior found that parents who pressured or used rewards to get their preschoolers to eat fruits and vegetables saw an immediate increase in intake, but also had children that were less likely to prefer such healthy foods.

### Make it a win-win.

What I like most about Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding, is it gives parents and children very specific jobs in the realm of feeding. Parents are in charge of deciding what is served at meal-time, when meals occur and where. Children get to be in charge of choosing what to eat and how much from what is offered to them.

So when my children complain about what I make for them, I always remind them that they can choose not to eat it. And I make sure to include at least one or two items they are likely to accept. This gives them some control, melts away the tension, and makes them more likely to try it (this is very different from an eat or starve strategy).

And isn't it enough that parents have to plan and shop for food, prepare meals and serve them in a structured manner? If they take on the added responsibility of their child's job of eating, it just makes the whole process more miserable. The same goes for when kids take over the parent's job of deciding what to eat. It's not fun being a short-order cook or being held hostage by a child who learns they hold all the power.

### Getting past the fear.

I have found that allowing children the freedom to choose from what is offered is not just hard on parents, it actually fills them with fear. What if they only eat bread? What if they say they are hungry before bed?

As a family nutrition expert, I help parents understand why children behave the way they do around food. I believe this information not only gives parents peace of mind -- and reduces guilt -- it helps parents understand why no-pressure feeding practices really are best.

For example, it helps that I know my 4-year-old is experiencing slowed growth and cognitive changes that mean his appetite is low and he is more selective with his food choices. I know that he meets his nutritional needs and usually does better at breakfast and lunch -- and I use snacks to fill in nutrition gaps -- so I'm relaxed come dinner. He will grow out of this resistant stage the same way his older sister did.

Additionally, the preschool years are a time children take initiative with daily tasks including eating. Children allowed to take the lead once food is served, and be successful, are more likely to feel good about eating. But children who aren't allowed to take initiative, and are criticized during the process, may develop a sense of guilt around eating, resulting in less confidence and enjoyment.

With a deeper understanding of feeding, parents can skip the food battles, trust their kids will move along with food acceptance at their own pace and embrace the family meal as a way to support children in this endeavor.

And those five words (you don't have to eat), while scary, allow this transformation to happen.

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# Breaking Bad Habits

Source: [Whattoexpect.com](http://Whattoexpect.com)

## When it comes to discouraging bad habits in children, knowing what not to do is important, too.

Every mom knows that little kids cling to their routines like gum to a shoe. After all, they're notorious for being cute creatures of habit. So is it any wonder that many moms need advice on how to nix bad habits in children? But whether a child's behavior is irksome (nose picking) or worrisome (head banging), the good news is that most of these baffling behaviors are pretty normal and often fade away on their own. Others may need subtle re-direction from you, but know that too big a push (like scolding, nagging, or teasing) and your tenacious tot may just dig in her heels. So how do you walk that fine line when it comes to breaking bad habits? Read on.

### Thumb Sucking

**Why they do it:** When you're a small kid venturing out into the big world, a trusty thumb (or finger) makes the perfect security object. It's always there when your tot needs it, especially when she's feeling pooped or stressed.

**What to do about it:** The good news is that most toddlers gradually drop the thumb-sucking habit on their own by about age three, and it usually doesn't affect the teeth or speech unless your child is sucking nonstop. If that's the case, try to keep hands and mouth busy with activities such as singing, working an easy puzzle, steering ride-on toys, or blowing bubbles. Teach your Thumbelina to make a fist with the thumb inside when she's tempted, and pile on the praise for big-kid actions ("you got your shoes on!") to motivate her to give up little-kid habits like thumb sucking. Remember, shaming your child ("only babies suck their thumbs") is neither effective nor kind.

### Attached to a Pacifier

**Why they do it:** Your pint-size explorer desperately wants to be independent ("Me do it!"), but taking those steps away from you into the unknown is daunting. That's where the power of the pacifier (aka binky or paci) comes in — in a scary situation or unfamiliar terrain, it's a familiar source of comfort.

**What to do about it:** Most kids will unplug by about age three, but if yours seems permanently glued to her pacifier, it's time to think about breaking this bad habit. (All-day binky action can cause ear infections, affect the teeth, and delay language and social skills.) Your first tactic: Poke a few holes in the nipple to make sucking less satisfying. Then gradually set limits (where or when she can use her paci), and applaud when she sticks to the new rules.

### Unable to Let Go of a Lovey

**Why they do it:** Your tot's lovey provides reassurance, especially when she's fighting off fears (of the dark, strangers, loud noises) and testing her budding independence. By age five or sooner, she'll likely loosen her grip.

**What to do about it:** Clutching a lovey isn't considered a bad habit in children unless it's interfering with everyday life (she won't drop her stuffed rabbit to play with other kids). If your child never goes outside without her beloved Bunny, try introducing limits she can live with. ("Bunny can come along, but he needs to wait in the car while we go to your gymnastics class.") You can also try keeping those little hands busy with finger-painting, puzzles, and other creative crafts

### Head Banging

**Why they do it:** Knock, knock. Who's there? Answer: Your child's head (which she bangs against the crib or wall next to her bed until she falls asleep). This is one of those bad habits in children (like hair pulling and rocking) that worries parents because it's so baffling. But it's actually just a way for toddlers to let off steam, especially at bedtime.

**What to do about it:** Provide lots of opportunities for your Energizer Bunny to tire herself out (running around, banging with a toy hammer) during the day. Near bedtime, take it down a notch with rituals that also satisfy the need for rhythmic action, like slow-dancing to soothing tunes after you've read a story. Finally, make sure bedtime isn't too early or too late — your tot should be sleepy but not overtired. If she's still banging away after age three, hurting herself, or is antisocial, talk to your pediatrician.

### Hair Twirling

**Why they do it:** Twirling hair is a self-comforting activity (yet another bad habit in children that falls under this category). Not unusual in kids under three, it's a way for little ones to wind down and deal with stress.

**What to do about it:** Parents bent on breaking bad habits often make the mistake of drawing attention to the no-no behavior. Instead of insisting your tiny twirler stop (chances are, it'll only make her twist more), give lots of TLC and find other ways to relieve stress and release energy. Get-up-and-go activities (running in the park, jumping rope, throwing balls) make good outlets for excess energy as do soothing routines like story time in your lap or listening to quiet music. Still coiling away? Consider a new do — shorter tresses are much less satisfying to twirl.

### Nose Picking

**Why they do it:** Kids often pick their noses because they're bored or stressed, or just nosy about what's in their nostrils. But the most passionate excavators are often children with allergies — the resulting mucus and crusting makes them feel like they always have something up there.

**What to do about it:** Of all the bad habits in children, parents probably find this the most annoying (and icky) but don't scold or shame your tot. Kids will gradually stop picking, in public at least, when they begin to care about what others think (around age four or five). In the meantime, distract digits with fun hands-on toddler activities (playing with blocks, puzzles). If the picking is causing bleeding, explain that it's making boo-boos in her nose and she can always ask you for help with a tissue. If you suspect an allergy, talk to your pediatrician.

### Nail Biting

**Why they do it:** If you're thinking stress and boredom, you've hit the nail on the head. Just like adults, toddlers bite their nails to relieve anxiety or because they have nothing else to do.

**What to do about it:** Don't pull your child's fingers from her mouth. That'll only lead to a power struggle (whose hands are they anyway?) and possibly feed her appetite for nail biting. The best way to break this bad habit is to help your nibbler de-stress through plenty of physical activity and relaxing pursuits (coloring, looking at books). Also, make this bad habit boring for biters by keeping nails short. Lots of attention and affection from you will act as buffers against stressful events (like a new sibling or caregiver). A sticker reward for bite-free days or a home manicure can be motivating, too.



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## Pre-K's Mom's Night Out!

The ladies in the Pre-K class celebrated a night sans kids at The Market by Jennifer's.

