



## Dynamite Ideas for Creating A Language-Rich Home



If you feel like you're living with a chatterbox, you would be correct. Children are acquiring language faster during the preschool years than at any other time in their lives. As a child's first teacher, parents have many opportunities to enhance language from the minute baby is brought home.

Here are some things you can do to create a language-rich environment in your home.

### **Read, Read, and Read Some More**

- Set aside time daily for reading. Children love it, and it contributes to success in kindergarten and beyond.
- Let older babies and toddlers sit on your lap and help turn the pages.
- On occasion, substitute your child's name for the name in the story.
- Encourage your child to join in on repetitious phrases.
- Older children benefit from being read to, even if they can read on their own.
- Read at bedtime, but don't forget other good times to read such as when kids are in the bathtub or waiting at the doctor's office.

### **Create Quiet Spaces for Reading**

- Establish reading nooks around your house or even outside.
- Place pillows and rugs on the floor to make the reading space comfortable and cozy.
- Create a special "reading box" by decorating a cardboard box with drawings and stickers and filling it with paper, junk mail, postcards, family pictures, and comic strips.
- Place puppets and stuffed animals in the reading space.

### **Increase a Love for Language**

- Mimic coos and babbles. Babies are listening and learning!

- Talk to your child during routine tasks. Say things such as, "Now you get to take a nice, warm bubble bath."
- Make up rhymes—children delight in silly sayings and nonsense words. Why else would they want to recite "Hey Diddle Diddle" or "Humpty Dumpty" over and over again?
- Learn some words in a different language.
- Introduce unfamiliar words to kids. "The dragon was humongous, and he trampled on the sand castle."
- Make up stories and tell them to your child. Don't be afraid to ham it up!

### **Create Opportunities and Spaces for Writing**

- Collect writing instruments and a variety of paper, and place them in a special writing nook. Having everything in one place makes writing practice easier for kids.
- Kids can write on all types of recycled things. Fill a shoebox with old business cards, receipt books, envelopes, cardboard, and junk mail.
- Writing doesn't always have to be done with markers, crayons, and pencils. Try chalk, paintbrushes, sticks, pine needles, and cotton swabs.
- Make lists of things needed from the store for a birthday party.
- Write events such as birthdays and holidays on calendars.
- Encourage older children to keep a diary.

### **Treat Books Like Treasures**

- Provide a special place for storing books.
- Trade books with friends.
- Borrow books and magazines from the library.
- Point out words and talk about the artwork in books.
- Teach your child to open the pages carefully.
- When books get torn, repair them right away.

### **Language Games and Activities:**

- Point out words on signs and storefronts.
- Place a note in a plastic bottle and send it sailing in the bathtub.
- Create books by stapling paper together and writing verbatim what your child says.
- Write words in sand or dirt with a stick.
- Record your child singing songs or reciting rhymes.
- Play alphabet hunting and word searches with older children.



**Create Spaces for Writing**



**Read, Read, Read**

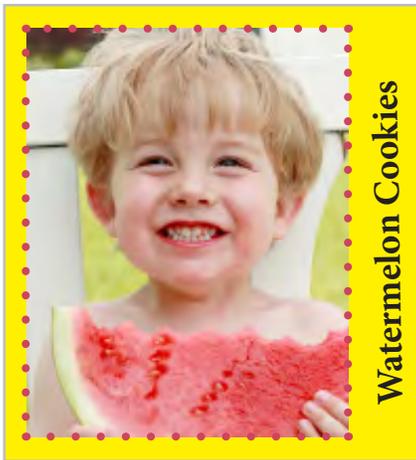
**Great Resource:** Check out [www.readingrockets.org/calendar/backtoschool](http://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/backtoschool) for awesome ideas on how to get kids settled back into their school routine. The site covers topics on everything from field trips to back-to-school tips for parents of children with special needs. It offers one-page tip sheets for parents in many languages from Chinese to Arabic, Russian to Navajo.

# PERSONAL PARENTING

## Bumps And Bruises Go Away

Kids are busy running and jumping, and sometimes they get a soft tissue injury along the way. Icing it is the best treatment, and the RICE method (rest, ice, compression, and elevation) works well for children and adults. For an easy way to ice, grab a pack of frozen vegetables or a plastic baggy filled with ice, place a dishcloth over it so the ice doesn't sting, and place it over the injury.

**This method reduces inflammation.**



Watermelon Cookies

Watermelon is packed with lycopene, a powerful antioxidant. It's also high in vitamin C, which helps protect against free radicals. Watermelon is plentiful this time of year, and this recipe is a simple way to get kids to eat more of this delicious fruit.

Cut shapes from ½-inch-thick slices of seedless watermelon. Frost the "cookies" with yogurt and sprinkle granola on top.

## SCENTED PLAY DOUGH

Play dough is always a hit with children, but this recipe offers a little aromatherapy!

### Ingredients:

- 2 ½ cups flour
- ½ cup salt
- 2 (1/4 ounce) packages powdered drink mix such as Kool-Aid (choose a flavor)
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2 cups boiling water
- 3 tablespoons oil (baby oil works well)

Mix the flour, salt, drink mix, and cream of tartar together. Gradually add the boiling water (this step is for adults) and oil. Stir with a spoon until the dough is cool enough to knead. Place on waxed paper and knead until smooth.

*Now the fun begins!*

## BLANKET FUN

- Place a blanket on the ground and have a family picnic. It's much more fun than eating inside at the table!
- Throw a blanket over a table or place it between two chairs to create an impromptu tent. Enhance the camping experience by providing play dishes, water bottles, books, and flashlights or headlamps.



- Place a blanket on the ground and gaze up at the sky. What do the clouds look like—elephants, mushrooms, monsters, or mountains?
- Place a variety of objects under a blanket. Choose one object and give hints about it. See how long it takes your child to guess the mystery object. "I feel something soft and furry. It's brown. It sleeps with you at night. What do you think it is?"

## I FEEL HAPPY: IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

Identifying feelings seems easy enough for adults. We felt exhilarated when the kids were up and out the door on time. But when the dishwasher broke down, again, frustration rushed in. The more kids learn how to understand and label feelings, the better.

Parents can go beyond teaching happy and sad by giving children words to match their feelings.

Here are some examples: delighted, frustrated, lonely, cheerful, angry, embarrassed, impatient, excited, and frightened.



# Positive Techniques Create Peace, Not More Battles

Some of us see the glass half-full; some of us see the glass half-empty, and some of us fit somewhere in between. Most of us prefer hanging out with grown-ups and children who have pleasant, upbeat attitudes most of the time, rather than with those who are obstinate, negative, and grouchy most of the time.

While we can't change children's temperaments, parents have a great opportunity on a daily basis to shed a positive light on any number of situations. We can watch our speech patterns (do we sound like our parents?), and we can help teach children how to overcome obstacles that crop up now and then. Being positive doesn't mean we never feel down or lonely or sad. It just means we have a certain way of looking at life and that we choose to pay more attention to the positive.

Rephrasing statements from negative to positive is an easy habit to get into, especially when you see your kids being positive, too.

- Instead of "Stop throwing the sand," say "Sand is for building."
- Instead of "I'm tired of your crying," say "I could hear what you're saying if you would stop crying."
- Instead of "Why can't you sit still?" say "Here's a puzzle to do while we wait."

Children display a lot of good behaviors that often go unnoticed. There's a balance between complimenting every little action and giving a genuine, specific compliment.

- "Thanks for sharing your crayons with Jason."
- "I like the way you put your books back on the shelf."
- "Thanks for not interrupting when I was on the phone."

## Build Your Positive Phrases Vocabulary

*Way to go!*

*Keep up the good work.*

*Awesome!*

*You're one in a million.*

*Look at you!*

*Well done.*

*You can do it!*

*Fantastic.*



No is a tiny word, but it often flies out of our mouths before we have a chance to think about why we're saying it, the impact it has on kids, and how we can rephrase our sentiments without quite so much fallout.

- Yes, you can visit Ruby, but in an hour, not now.
- Yes, you can take your new book to school but only on sharing day.
- Yes, you can open your new paints when I have time to help you.

Children can be taught how to compromise. It's a good tool for them to have as they learn to solve conflicts that get more complicated over time. And home is a good place to start because situations come up on a daily basis that benefit from a little give-and-take.

- You can choose a birthday present for Kevin, but we need to stick to our \$10 budget.
- We can't get a big dog for a pet because our apartment is too small, but let's check out smaller breeds.
- I know you want to spend the night at Grandma's but not until the weekend.

*Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.*

Lady Bird Johnson