

Teach, Guide and Love

Energetic, happy and excited are perfect words to describe four year olds. They learn constantly and have boundless energy. As parents and caregivers we still need to watch them closely, as they do not recognize their own limitations.

Preschooler's minds are developing rapidly – they act like sponges absorbing every experience around them. They can tell you how they feel, are both independent and social, love being silly and playing pretend games.

Your preschooler likes boundaries and limits. Instructions such as "you can run as far as the tree" gives your 4 year old independence along with a limit. Rules help her control her behaviour and predict what will happen next. In fact, she likes rules so much she might even invent some of her own, such as "I only wear blue socks on Tuesday".

Preschoolers have strong needs for companionship and may have one special friend they enjoy playing with. Friends help your child to see the world is bigger than her immediate family.

This is also a time when your 4 old collects some not so desirable behaviours or expressions. Often your preschooler is testing to see what kind of reaction or attention she will receive. Remaining calm and being consistent are important rules for parents and caregivers.

Remember, your preschooler still needs your attention, time and love, especially when she is being challenging. Teach her, guide her, love her.



If I Had My Life to Live Over

I would have talked less and listened more.
I would have eaten popcorn in the "good" living room.
I would have taken time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.
I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.
Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.
When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner".
There would have been more "I love you's" and "I'm sorry's"...but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it...live it...and never give it back.
Stop sweating the small stuff. Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what. Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who do love us. Let's think about what we are blessed with. And what we are doing each day to promote ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, as well as spiritually.
Adapted from a poem from Erma Bombeck

Help your Child be a Good Listener

"Mom, my ears are not turned on right now!" Do you ever wonder if your child really can't hear you or if she is just tuning you out? There are many reasons why your 4 year old might not be listening. She might be tired or hungry, upset or preoccupied. She might be getting too much information from you. Here are some tips to help your child improve her listening skills:

1. Check your listening skills. Look at your child and make eye contact when she is speaking to you.
2. Acknowledge your child's feelings. Say something like, **"You sound angry with Tommy."**
3. Match your speaking style and expectations to your child's age and development.
4. Get down to your child's height when speaking and playing with her.
5. Make sure you are not talking over the TV or a computer game.
6. Keep messages simple and clear, such as **"Please put your toys away. Someone might trip on them."**
7. Make sure you are understood. Asking your preschooler if she knows what she is supposed to do will tell you how much she understands.

Remember...preschoolers are easily distracted and may have trouble doing things consistently. Regardless of your child's age, good listening skills take time. You need to listen to your child, respect what they say and acknowledge their feelings.

Routines

Children like routines. They like to know what to expect and when to expect it. Creating routines helps your child prepare for the day ahead.

Mornings can be a struggle in many homes as parents are trying to get out the door on time. Children may seek attention for a variety of reasons: not wanting to leave you, not wanting to go to school, or not feeling well. They learn that when they resist, argue or stall they get attention, even if it's negative. Such a routine can leave everyone frustrated, exhausted and discouraged. Here are some tips that might help your child get ready for a new school routine:

1. Practice your new routine before school starts.
2. Stop daytime naps and have everyone go to bed a little earlier.
3. Encourage independence with washing hands, brushing teeth and getting dressed.
4. Prepare clothes, backpacks and lunches the night before.
5. Provide positive reinforcement for being ready on time. Let your child know by saying, **"I really liked how you got ready today"**. If your child is ready early, reward him by reading a book before school.
6. Use a bulletin board for putting up messages, pictures and reminders about family and school activities.
7. Don't expect miracles. There are always going to be days where things don't run smoothly. Remember, each day is a new opportunity.

Surviving the "Witching Hour"

Often the most frustrating time of day for parents is the hours between 4 and 6 p.m. After a long day, parents and children are typically hungry, tired and low on patience. Try these steps to make this difficult time more enjoyable:

- Give your child a small, nutritious snack (such as cheese and crackers or raw vegetables and dip). Preschoolers often misbehave when they are hungry, tired or want attention.
- Spend some time talking with your child about his day. Listen to his responses.
- Ask your child to help you prepare dinner. He can set the table or tear lettuce for a salad. This will help him be involved in the meal preparation and allow you to spend some valuable time together.
- Most importantly, make dinner a family priority. Enjoy your meal together!



KEEP ON TRACK ~ Check your Child's Immunization Records!

Sometime between ages 4 and 6 your child will need their next immunizations (or booster shots). You can make an appointment with your health care provider or with your local public health unit. Make sure you keep all of your child's immunization records in a safe place with other documents such as birth certificates and passports. Proof of immunization is needed when starting daycare or school in Ontario. Contact your local health unit to update your child's immunization record.



Look At What I Can Do!

From 3 ½ years to 4 ½ years,
these are some of the things I can do:

3 1/2
Years

- I like to make up new words and use words that rhyme
- I can repeat three numbers
- I like to sing along with my favourite songs even if I don't know all the words
- I enjoy games with simple rules
- I love playing make-believe
- I can walk along a balance beam without falling off
- I can concentrate for at least twenty minutes
- I can move to music
- I use plural words like "shoes"
- I understand "on top", "beside" and "in front"
- I can put simple jigsaw puzzles together
- I can match pictures in matching games
- I can pour from a small pitcher
- I am beginning to cut along a line with scissors
- I can string small beads
- I use about 2000 words – my sentences are four or five words long
- I like to bounce on a trampoline
- I can sort objects by colour, shape and size
- I can repeat four numbers correctly or count to ten
- I like to print the first letter of my name or my whole name
- I can put on my own coat (I may need help with the zipper)
- I can do up my own shoes

4 1/2
Years

Watch for these Speech and Language Milestones

By Age 4 My Child:

- Uses four to five word sentences that have adult-like grammar
- Tells a story that is easy to follow, with a beginning, a middle and an end
- Predicts what might happen next in a new story
- Gives first and last name, gender and age
- Uses most consonant and vowel sounds correctly
- Follows three-part directions like, "**Get your boots, put them on and wait at the door**"

Parents usually know their child best. If you did not check all of the boxes above, please call **tykeTALK** at **519-663-0273** or toll free at **1-877-818-8255** to find out more that you can do to help your child learn to talk.

Imagination and Play

Play is how your child learns about the world around her. She is now very creative and will let her imagination go. She might develop her own themes like dragons and knights. Your child likes to play with things around the house such as large boxes for a castle. Encourage your child to play creatively. It develops her ability to problem-solve and to use something familiar in a new way. Your child and her friends might pretend to be the knight, the dragon or the castle. Enjoy this special time of "performing" with your child as she uses make believe in so many wonderful ways.





◀ ● ● ● Grow

*Shake, shake, shake your sillies out
Shake, shake, shake your sillies out
Shake, shake, shake your sillies out
And wiggle your worries away.*

“Get the Wiggles Out”

Practice walking on tiptoes, balancing on a beam, running, jumping, climbing and galloping with your child. Building an obstacle course is a lot of fun. Your child can climb on top of a bench, underneath a chair and run between two things. Include a beanbag toss in the obstacle course – your child is learning to catch and throw. Frame some of your child’s artwork – he loves drawing pictures of his family. Reading stories is a great time to learn! Talk about how people feel in the stories, concepts such as big and little, fast and slow, and near and far. Start a conversation with your child. He can tell you his likes and dislikes and you can share yours.



◀ ● ● ● Play

Questions, Questions, Questions!

How does the cow jump over the moon? Why does Peter Pumpkin Eater live in a pumpkin? Your child has endless questions that need answers. Be patient as your curious child learns about the world around him. Playmates are very important at this age – your child may want to invite friends over to play games with rules. “Simon Says” is one of his favourites. Your child loves to share nursery rhymes and sing songs. Learning is a lot of fun when you play with your child; match pictures, shapes and objects. Get some of your old clothes out and fill up a dress-up trunk. Help your child make up a play or puppet show and invite family and friends over for the performance.



◀ ● ● ● Talk

Let’s LOOK into a BOOK!

Your child loves when you help him hold and turn the pages of a book. Pick a special time to read books with your child – it doesn’t have to be before bedtime! It’s fun to point at pictures and look at them together. Libraries and resource centres are great places to find books. Your child may want to read the same books over and over again. This helps your child recognize words, events and how the story begins and ends. Making your own book about a trip or “adventure” with your child with your own photos will help your child enjoy the wonderful world of reading and learning.

Nutrition for Kinderkids ~ Picky Eaters

Grilled cheese sandwiches every day for lunch...cold cereal every morning...sound familiar? Some children don't outgrow their pickiness about food when they start school. This can be frustrating, but try not to let it bother you. Usually the fussiness will last longer if you try to coax, bribe or punish a child for not eating new foods. Instead,

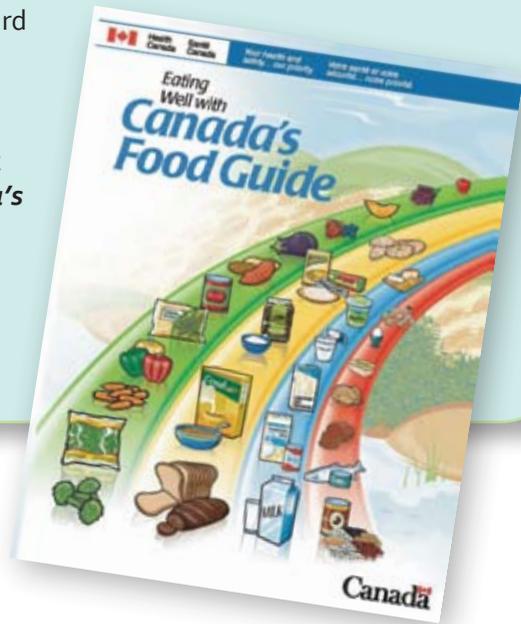
- Continue to offer new foods
- Set an example yourself
- Let your child choose between a couple of food choices
- Get your child involved in making snacks and meals
- Include a favourite food with each new meal



“Brain Food”

Although there is no single food nutrient that can make your child smarter in school, the type of food he eats and how often he eats can affect his performance.

Teachers have found that hungry students tend to be more disruptive, less attentive and less interested in learning. This is because they find it hard to concentrate. They are more concerned about when they get to eat next. As a result, hungry children do not perform as well in school as children who eat both breakfast and lunch. What a student eats is just as important as how often he eats. A good breakfast should include at least 1 serving from 3 of the 4 food groups of **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide**. A healthy lunch would include 1 serving from each of the four food groups.



Children's Vitamins

Most children, even picky eaters, do not need a vitamin pill. Teach your child that good nutrition comes from food, not pills. If you have vitamin/mineral pills in the house, store them safely out of reach. Children can be poisoned by an overdose of nutrients from these drugs. If you have a concern about your child's nutrition, talk to your health care provider.

Building Confidence

Building your child's confidence will help him develop a positive self-image. There is a strong connection between how your child feels about himself and how he behaves. Helping your child build his self-esteem is not only a foundation for child well-being; it is also vital to discipline. Here are some suggestions to help build your child's confidence:

- Be positive – give hugs, give complements and remember to laugh with your child.
- Help your child to understand it's okay not to be perfect and that everyone is good at some things and not as good at other things.
- Give your child your time. Doing things with your child – such as reading books, playing and even watching TV – tells him that he is important to you.
- Say, **“I love you”** – you can tell your child this and show him with smiles, hugs and kisses.
- Really listen to your child when he tells you things.
- Use positive discipline – make sure your child understands rules and consequences. Be consistent and make sure rules are right for his age.
- Criticize behaviours only – NOT your child. For example, say **“I'm upset that you wouldn't share with Sarah,”** instead of **“You're a mean girl for not sharing”**.
- Be patient and enjoy the time you spend together with your child.

Booster Seat Readiness

By law, your child must be 18 kg (40 lb.) to use a booster seat. **Don't be in a hurry to move your child to a booster.** It is safer for your child to use a 5 point harness for as long as possible. Many new models of car seats allow a child to be harnessed up to 30 kg (65 lbs.). If your child is too tall for her car seat (the harness comes from below her shoulders or the top of her ears are level with the top of the car seat) but she is not yet 18 kg (40 lbs.) you will need to buy her a new car seat. Some models of Child/Booster seats have a higher top harness slot so they can fit taller children.



Playground Safety

Playgrounds are a great place for children to have fun, get exercise, test their skills and play creatively with other kids. In order to prevent injuries, it is important for parents and children to know the skills to play safe at the playground.

- Always supervise your child closely and ensure she knows how to use the equipment safely
- Teach safety rules such as taking turns, going down the slide feet first, holding onto railings and sitting down on swings and slides
- Remind your child to keep away from moving swings and the bottom of the slide
- Before play, make sure your child removes her helmet, scarves and drawstrings as these can be choking hazards
- Children should avoid playing with skipping ropes around the equipment
- Parents should check the playground: it should have a deep, soft surface and handrails or barriers to prevent falls
- Parents should also check for any sharp objects or spaces where a child's head could get stuck

Ready, Set, Go!

Your 4 year old is busy learning new physical skills which might include riding a bike. Children under the age of 18 are required by law to wear a helmet – and for good reason! A properly fitted bike helmet helps protect the head by absorbing the force from a crash or a fall, and decreases the risk of serious head injury by 85 percent and brain injury by 88 percent. To ensure the helmet is a good fit:

- The helmet should sit low – the brim of the helmet should be about 2 fingers width (1 -2 cm) above the eyebrows
- The helmet should not be tilted forward or backward
- The chinstraps should go over both ears in the shape of a V (the ear should be in the middle of the V)
- The chinstrap should be secure around the chin with room for one finger between the strap and the chin

Children learn by example. When your child sees you wear a bicycle helmet, she will be more likely to want to wear her helmet too.





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