

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Finish strong

As your child thinks ahead to summer, he may be tempted to relax his efforts in school. Explain that staying focused in every class will help him learn and prepare him for end-of-year tests. And by keeping on top of final projects, he'll prevent a last-minute scramble.

Spring clothes

Now is a good time to review the school dress code with your tween so you're on the same page about what to wear. For instance, maybe bike shorts, tank tops, or flip-flops aren't allowed. Suggest that your child keep school clothes and shoes separate from those for working out or wearing around the house. This will make choosing outfits easier.

Publish a book review

Have your middle schooler think more deeply about her reading with this idea. After she finishes a novel, she might enjoy writing a review that will give others a good idea of what the book is about. Let her publish her review at an online bookstore for others to read. *Note:* Be sure she doesn't use her real name.

Worth quoting

"A good laugh is sunshine in the house." *William Makepeace Thackeray*

Just for fun

Q: I'm as light as a feather, but the world's strongest person can't hold me for long. What am I?

A: A breath.



Electronics: Creating a balance

Technology lets middle graders do research with the touch of a button or video-chat with relatives who live far away. Too much technology, however, might cause your tween to feel isolated and to sit still much longer than is good for her. Consider these ways to keep her usage in check.

Set the stage

Encourage face-to-face interaction by putting away devices (including yours) at established times, such as during meals, family outings, or a sibling's lacrosse game. When you're using a device and your child interrupts, switch your attention to her. She'll see that the person in front of you is more important than what's on the screen.

Wait for social media

Most social media sites require users to be 13 or older, yet some children are using fake birth dates to create accounts. Let your middle schooler know she must be old enough *and* get your okay to join. Consider setting up a family account, but

keep the password to yourself. She can send you photos or links to post.

Harness the good

Suggest that your tween take advantage of technology to connect with family members or to do research. She might play an electronic version of a board game with a cousin in another town. Or if she's stumped on a craft project, she could look up instructions online. Also, let her use the internet to research extracurricular activities or summer programs. 👍



Tinker with engineering

STEM activities are popular with tweens these days. Encourage your child to explore the "E" in STEM with these engineering ideas.

■ **Take apart.** Have him disassemble—and then reassemble—simple mechanical objects like a pen or flashlight. In the process, he can figure out what each part is used for and how it works.

■ **Design.** Let your middle grader draw an invention to solve an engineering problem. He might sketch a more efficient system for delivering clean water to areas that lack it, for instance.

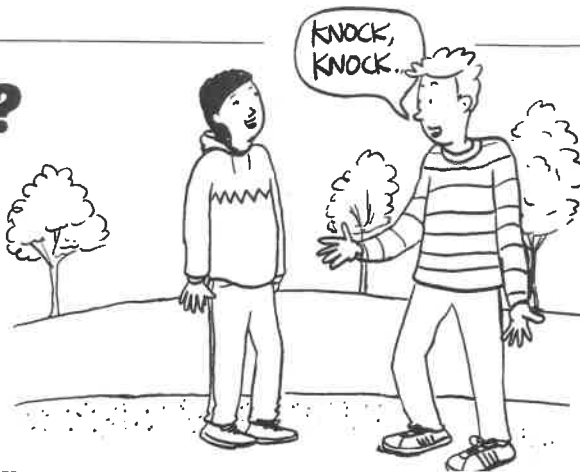
■ **Build.** Suggest that your tween use household materials to engineer projects related to what he's studying in class. If he's learning about thermal energy, he could make a pizza-box solar oven. 👍



Funny—or not?

Joking around is a good way for tweens to let off steam and bring people together. But humor may also hurt people's feelings—or even be considered bullying if it's done repeatedly to make someone feel bad. Here's how to help your child draw the line.

Demonstrate differences. Show your middle grader that a joke that's funny to one person might not be funny to someone else. Let him and friends or family members list types of jokes they think are humorous (such as knock-knock jokes) on one piece of paper and those



they don't (like practical jokes) on another. Then, share lists. Your tween may be surprised if what appears in his "funny" category falls into another person's "not funny" one.

Think it through. Before your child tells a joke, suggest that he consider how it will affect those around him. Is the topic one that somebody might be sensitive about, such as weight? Could the joke come across as a put-down? If so, he should avoid it. *Tip:* If he'll feel the need to say "Just kidding" or "No offense" afterward, that's a sign the joke may be hurtful. 🍷



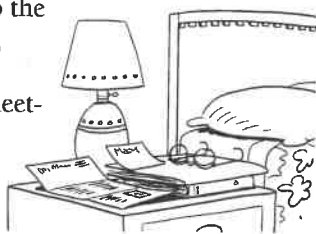
Parent to Parent Still in touch with school

Recently, I started feeling bogged down with the school-year routine. I wasn't keeping up with papers my daughter Molly brought home. When another parent mentioned a meeting I didn't know about, I realized I had to get back to being more involved.

Thanks to the other parent, Molly and I attended a meeting for next fall's cross country team. We

learned about summer conditioning and signed up for coaches' updates. Had we skipped the meeting, Molly might have missed out on participating altogether.

Now I've started opening school emails right away. I also have Molly put papers on my nightstand so I'm reminded to read them before bed. Staying in touch has made me more enthusiastic about her school and activities. And I think it makes Molly feel good in knowing I care. 🍷



Facts about opioids

The opioid epidemic is making headlines everywhere. Take steps now to protect your tween from these highly addictive, and potentially deadly, drugs.

Be informed

Opioids include prescription pain relievers such as Vicodin, oxycodone, and fentanyl. Heroin is also an opioid.

Be cautious

Middle graders may be prescribed painkillers after a sports injury or a wisdom tooth extraction, for example. Ask the doctor or dentist about alternatives to opioids. If your child is given medicine, dispense each dose to her. Keep it locked up between doses, and discard any leftovers.

Be observant

If you notice that your tween has mood swings, withdraws from family and friends, or loses interest in favorite activities, talk to her pediatrician. 🍷



Q & A

A successful IEP meeting

Q My son was just diagnosed with a learning disability. What can I expect at our first IEP meeting?

A An IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting lets you talk with an entire team about how everyone can help your son learn.

Before the meeting, write down questions and concerns. Get your son's input, too. What does he feel he's doing well? What is hard for him? What goals would he like to set?



This meeting can be emotional for you as a parent, since you'll hear about what your child struggles with. There will also be a lot of information to absorb. Consider taking along a spouse, friend, or relative to provide support and to help you remember what was said.

Also, remember that you're a key part of the IEP team. If there's an accommodation you think could boost your son's success, such as keeping one set of textbooks in his locker and another at home, it's important to speak up. 🍷

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Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2018

Middle Country School District
Title I - Parental Involvement

Book Picks

■ *Cosmic* (Frank Cottrell Boyce)

Twelve-year-old Liam is tall for his age, and he and his friend Florida think it's funny to pretend they're father and son. They go so far as to use this joke to win a trip to outer space. When their rocket veers off course, everyone expects "Dad" to save the day—not knowing he's just a kid. (Also available in Spanish.)

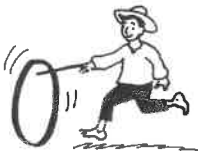


■ *Dara Palmer's Major Drama* (Emma Shevah)

Dara wants to star in her school's production of *The Sound of Music*. When she's not cast, she thinks it's because she's adopted from Cambodia and doesn't look the part. In this coming-of-age story, Dara learns to take pride in her heritage.

■ *A Child Through Time: The Book of Children's History* (Phil Wilkinson)

How did children live in the past? This book takes young readers on an exciting journey from the Ice Age to modern times. Profiles of 30 children deliver kid-friendly information on the games, food, and clothes from different historical eras.



■ *The Mayor of Central Park* (Avi)

Oscar isn't your typical mayor. He's a squirrel, and he's also the manager of Central Park's baseball team. When rats invade his park, Oscar must stop them before they drive out the other animal residents. Fans of animals and baseball will enjoy this tale.



Synthesizing from start to finish

Your youngster's understanding and opinion of a book he has just started reading may be very different from the way he thinks and feels when he's finished. That's because readers *synthesize*, or adjust their thinking, as they digest a story or topic. Try these activities to help your child notice how his thinking changes as he reads.

Make a jigsaw puzzle

Synthesizing is like putting together a puzzle—you don't see the big picture until you're done. Have your youngster draw lines to divide a poster board into 8–10 puzzle pieces, number each piece, and cut them apart.

Then, he could write about his growing comprehension of a story on separate puzzle pieces. The first piece might say, "This book seems to be about two kids who have nothing in common and don't like each other." And the final piece may read, "Now I know that the story was actually about accepting differences." Each time he fills out a piece, he adds it to the puzzle. When he finishes the book, he can read his puzzle in order.

STORY NEWS



Be a newscaster

Invite your child to pretend he's reporting on a "developing story." He can give you updates that reflect his latest understanding as he reads several nonfiction books on the same topic.

Say he's researching the Titanic. His original "broadcast" could be: "A ship sank, and there weren't enough lifeboats to save everyone." As he reads on and discovers that there's more to the story, perhaps he'll report: "Many more passengers would've been saved if the lifeboats had been filled to capacity." ■

Experiment with point of view

One fun part of being an author is that you get to decide which character will tell the story. Help your child see how interesting a change in perspective can be!

● Encourage your youngster to rewrite a familiar story. For example, she might have Babe the Blue Ox tell the tale of Paul Bunyan. The original version makes the lumberjack's feats sound pretty amazing—is Babe in awe of his owner, or tired of his antics?

● If a visitor from the distant future came to your town, what would he think of it? Suggest that your youngster draw one comic strip showing a day from her point of view ("We rode the school bus"), and another showing the time traveler's ("We traveled in a rickety yellow capsule and stayed on the ground the whole time"). ■

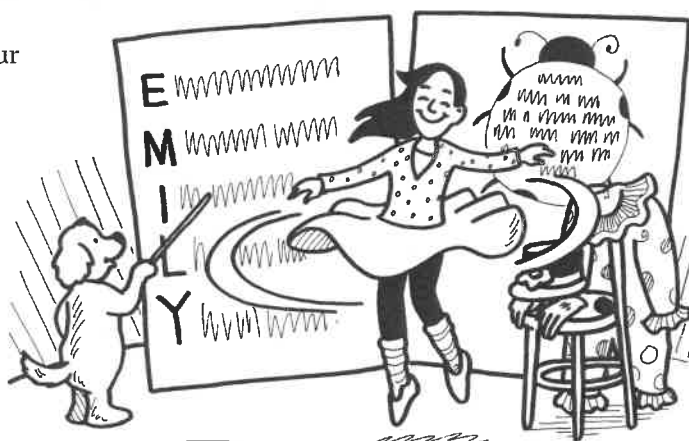


Poetry writing made easy!

Poems are a great way for children to express themselves and practice writing. Use these ideas to spark your youngster's interest in poetry.

Acrostic "selfie." Have your child write her name vertically down the left side of a sheet of paper. Now she could begin each line of a poem about herself with a letter of her name:

*Each day brings new adventures
Middle child and only girl
In dance class I love to twirl
Living in a little town
You know I love to be a clown!*



Shape poem. This idea encourages your youngster to choose words that will fit specific line lengths. Suggest that she draw the outline of an object,

perhaps a ladybug or a flower. Then, she can write a poem that fills the space inside. For instance, the first and last lines of a poem about ladybugs would be shorter than the middle lines:

*Bright
speck of red
on a green leaf;
cute little ladybug
with polka-dots.
Fly away
home!*

Fun
with
Words

Sentence scramble

Encourage your child to think about sentence structure and grammar with this cooperative game.

1. Secretly write a sentence from a book on a sheet of paper, and cut the words apart. Mix them up, and place them in a bowl on the ground.



2. Have two or more players line up 15 feet from the bowl.
3. On "Go," the first player runs to the bowl, grabs a word, and returns to the line.
4. He tags the next player, who runs to pick up a word, and so on.
5. Once the players collect all the words, they rebuild the sentence together. *Tip:* Suggest that they find the subject, add the verb, and then look for ways the remaining words could fit into the sentence.
6. Play again using a new sentence from the book.

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Parent 2 Parent

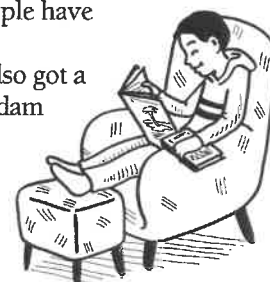
The perfect pair: Fiction and nonfiction

My son Adam loves adventure novels. Reading these stories has made him curious about things like exotic locations and extreme sports. When he asked questions I couldn't answer, it reminded me of how his teacher wants kids to read more nonfiction.

So when he wondered how many people have climbed Mt. Everest, I suggested that he look for a nonfiction book about the mountain. Adam borrowed a school library book and learned that more than 4,000 people have reached the summit.

Then, when he checked out a story set in Antarctica, he also got a nonfiction book about scientists living and working there. Adam said that knowing which events and details in the story were based on facts made the book even better for him!

Now Adam often reads fiction and nonfiction that are related. He's picking up a lot of new facts—and reading more books, too.



Q&A

Building your child's book collection

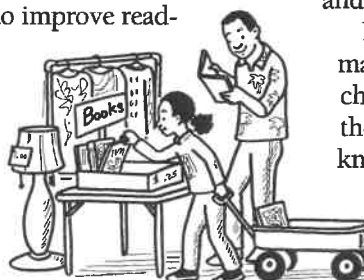
Q I've heard it's good for kids to have books of their own, but we're on a budget. Any tips on building a home library for my daughter?

A You're right. Having books at home is one of the best ways to improve reading achievement. And kids love seeing old favorites on their shelves to read whenever they like.

Now that spring is here, consider going to yard sales or flea

markets with your child to pick out books. The school book fair is another place to stock up on low-cost books. And don't forget year-round opportunities like used bookstores, thrift shops, and discount online bookstores.

Finally, friends and relatives may have chapter books or children's nonfiction books they're finished with. Let them know your daughter would love to inherit them—you could even offer to pick them up.



Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

April 2018

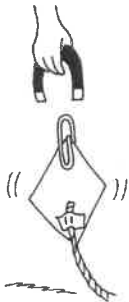
Middle Country School District
Title I - Parental Involvement

INFO BITS

World records

Here's a fun way for your youngster to compare numbers. Encourage her to look up world records (fastest animal, farthest Olympic long jump). Then, help her set her own records by timing her speed or measuring her jumps. She could subtract her records from those of the animal or Olympian to find the difference.

Up, up, and away



It's magnetism, not wind, that keeps this "kite" in the air. Ask your child to cut a kite out of paper. He should put a metal paper clip on one corner and tape a string to the opposite corner. If he holds a magnet

close to the paper clip, the magnet attracts the clip, and the kite "flies."

Web picks

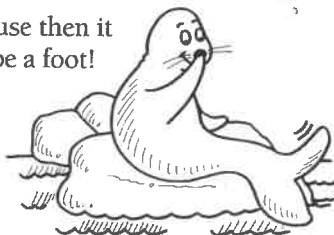
Break a math code, solve a math riddle, and try many more challenges at rich.maths.org/primary-upper.

At sciencebuddies.org/science-activities, your child can find instructions for making marshmallows, using crickets to tell the temperature, and other science projects.

Just for fun

Q: Why isn't your nose 12 inches long?

A: Because then it would be a foot!



Use math to manage money

It's never too early for your child to learn about money management. In the process, he will count money, solve equations, and work with decimals. Try these ideas for building math skills and financial literacy.

Play pizzeria

Hold a pizza night, and let family members use board game money to "pay" your youngster for their slices. If 1 slice costs 64 cents and he's handed a \$5 bill, how would he figure out the change? He might think that 0.64 to 0.70 is 6 cents, 0.70 to \$1.00 is 30 cents, and \$1.00 to \$5.00 is 4 dollars. So he'd give back \$4.36.



"\$1.00 x 5 = \$5.00 and \$0.30 x 5 = \$1.50. \$5.00 + \$1.50 = \$6.50." When he compares his estimate to the price of the bag, he'll see that the bag is a better buy.

Make a budget

Encourage your youngster to create a personal budget. Have him add up how much money he might get in a year from an allowance, odd jobs, or birthday money. Then, he could divide by 12 for his monthly "income." Now, he can draw up a budget, setting aside a portion for spending, saving, and donating.

A hula-hoop ecosystem

It might seem quiet in your backyard, but there's actually a lot going on. Your youngster just needs to look down to discover a mini-ecosystem of living and nonliving things interacting with each other.

First, have her put down a hula hoop (or a circle of rope) to mark off her ecosystem. Then, on a round paper plate, she can draw and label what she observes. Perhaps she'll spot an earthworm poking out of the soil, a leaf with an edge nibbled off, or an interesting rock.

Your child should visit her ecosystem each day and draw her observations on a new plate. Look at the plates together, and ask her to describe how the ecosystem changes.



Creative arrays

Arrays make multiplication and division easy to see. Let your youngster arrange objects or pictures in even rows and columns and solve the problems they represent. Share these activities.

Draw and multiply. Write multiplication problems on index cards, such as $6 \times 5 = \underline{\quad}$. Your child can draw an array to show each problem—perhaps 6 columns of hearts with 5 hearts in each row.



She can solve by multiplying the number of columns by the number of rows ($6 \times 5 = 30$). Encourage her to draw the array another way (5 columns and 6 rows). She'll see that the answer is the same ($5 \times 6 = 30$). This shows the *commutative property* of multiplication—the order of the numbers doesn't matter.

Sculpt and divide. Give each other division problems, and make play-dough arrays to solve. If you say, " $28 \div 4$," your youngster would roll the dough into 28 balls and arrange them in 4 rows.

To find the answer, she should count the number of columns and answer, " $28 \div 4 = 7$." How would she rearrange the array to show $28 \div 7 = 4$?

MATH CORNER

Collect the triangles

Not all triangles are the same. Your youngster can practice identifying different types of triangles with this game.

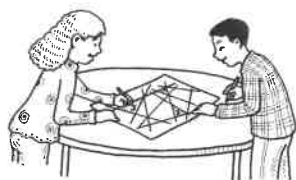
1. Have your child and a friend use rulers and pencils to draw criss-

crossing diagonal lines of various lengths all over a sheet of paper. This will create different kinds of triangles—right, acute, and obtuse.

2. Using a different color crayon, they can take turns shading one tri-

angle at a time. Each player should write a point value inside: 1 point for an obtuse triangle, 2 for an acute triangle, and 3 for a right triangle.

3. When the last triangle is shaded in, they'll have a colorful mosaic! The player with the most points wins.



Kinds of triangles

Right: One angle is 90° .

Acute: All three angles are less than 90° .

Obtuse: One angle is greater than 90° .

SCIENCE LAB

Vacuum power

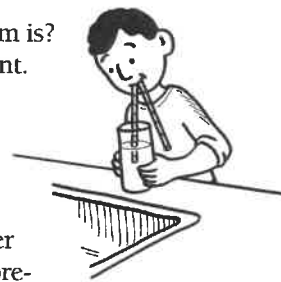
Does your child know what a vacuum is? He'll find out with this clever experiment.

You'll need: cup, water, 2 drinking straws

Here's how: Have your youngster fill the cup with water and take a sip with one straw. Then, he should hold the second straw outside the cup and sip through both straws at the same time. Finally, he can put both straws in the water and sip from them together. *Tip:* At each stage, ask him to predict the outcome before he sips.

What happens? When your child sips with one or both straws in the water, the water comes up as expected. But when one straw is in the water and the other is out, he can't sip the water at all!

Why? Sucking on a straw in liquid creates a vacuum—or an empty space—which the water rushes in to fill. When he sucks on both straws (one in the water and the other out of the water), the air coming through the straw outside the drink prevents a vacuum from forming—so the straw in the water won't work.



Q & A

My "function robot"

Q: My son is learning about functions in math. I don't remember doing those in school! How can I help him?

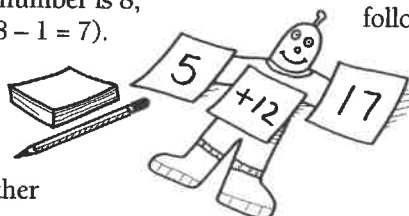
A: Think of a function as a "rule" that tells you how to get from one number to another. For instance, if your rule is " -1 " and your starting number is 8, then your answer is 7 ($8 - 1 = 7$).

Have your child draw a "function robot" with a body and two hands. Label one hand "Input" and the other

"Output." On separate sticky notes, write "rules" like " -7 " or " $\times 2, +5$." Then, let your child number 20 more sticky notes, 1–20.

Take turns sticking a rule (say, " $+12$ ") on the robot's body. Then, input a number (say, 5) by sticking it on the "Input" hand. The other person makes the robot follow the rule ($5 + 12$),

writes the answer (17) on a blank sticky note, and places it on the robot's "Output" hand.



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Recipes for Success

Practical Activities to Help Your Child Succeed

Middle Country School District
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READING

AAA: Absolutely appealing acronyms

With this activity, your children will learn about acronyms—and create some of their own.

Ingredients: newspaper, paper, pencils, timer

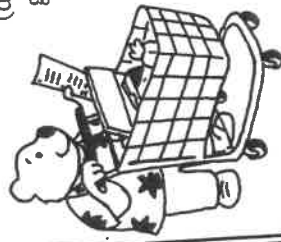
Give each person a section of the newspaper. Set a timer for 3 minutes. Search your sections for acronyms, and list as many as you can find. *Hint:* Explain that an acronym is an abbreviation formed from the initials of several words. For example, NASA is the acronym for National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Trade papers, and try to identify what each acronym stands for. Then, have fun inventing acronyms of your own. Maybe your youngsters will come up with "MUM" for Mom's Unbeatable Meatloaf!



WRITING

Have your child help you make a more organized grocery list. Together, write down the departments or aisles found in the store (dairy, canned goods, produce). Name items you need, and ask her to write each one under the correct category.



MUSIC

Let your youngster make his own kazoo. He can cover one end of a toilet paper tube with waxed paper and secure it with a rubber band. Help him use a pencil to poke a hole in the tube near the covered end. To play his kazoo, he should hum into the open end. What happens if he puts his finger over the hole?



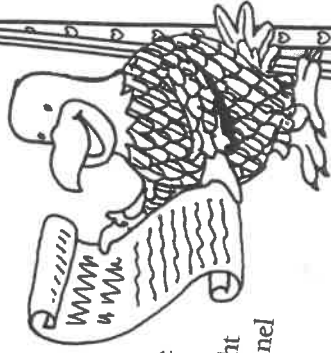
SOCIAL STUDIES

Family bill of rights

Teach your youngster about the Bill of Rights by making one for your family.

Ingredients: copy of the Bill of Rights (from a history book or the internet), paper, pencil, paper grocery bag, marker

Together, look over the Bill of Rights. Explain that it describes the basic rights of Americans, such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Next, your youngster could ask everyone what would be notes as family members share ideas (right to privacy, right to help choose family activities). Finally, cut one large panel from a grocery bag, and let your child use the notes to write your family's bill of rights on it.



GEOMETRY

Speaking of shapes

Can your child spot an octagon? Use this activity to help him recognize shapes he sees every day.

Ingredients: index cards, pencil, crayons

Have your youngster draw a shape (circle, square, rectangle, triangle, octagon) on separate index cards and label each one. An older child might also draw and label solid shapes (sphere, cone, cylinder).

Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown. Turn over the top card. The first person to think of an object that matches the shape keeps the card. For a circle, your child might shout out "plate" and take the card. For cone, you could say "traffic cone."



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Character Corner

RESPECT FOR THE EARTH

Celebrate Earth Day with your family this month by finding ways to protect the environment. For instance, you might turn off the water while you brush your teeth or walk to the store instead of driving.



CONCENTRATION

Sit in a circle, and hold a ball. Tell about your day, and roll the ball to someone else. Keep going until everyone has had three turns. Your child will need to pay attention so he'll be ready when the ball comes his way.



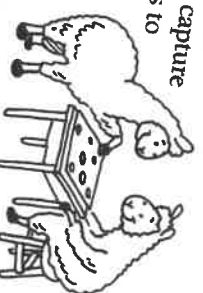
COURAGE

Encourage your youngster to try something new that she's hesitant about. Maybe she wishes she could swim but doesn't like getting her face wet. Help her follow through by signing her up for swim lessons.



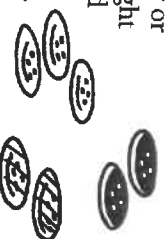
THINKING

Try this idea to build your child's critical-thinking skills. Challenge him to a game of checkers—but instead of trying to capture your pieces, he tries to get you to capture his. The winner is the first player to lose all his checkers.



SORTING

How many ways can your youngster sort buttons or crayons? Perhaps she'll separate buttons into small, medium, and large or into four holes vs. two holes. Crayons could be sorted according to color or whether they're light or dark. Your child will learn to look for common traits.



SCIENCE

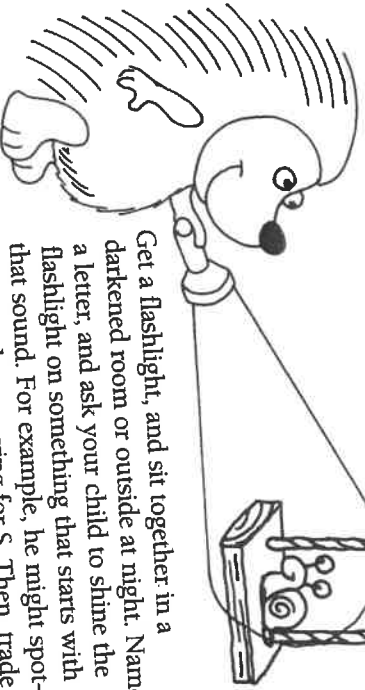
Have your youngster learn about liquids and solids by "churning" her own butter. Let her pour whipping cream into a jar and screw on the lid. Take turns shaking the jar for about 10 minutes. Explain that the liquid (cream) are getting closer together, forming a solid (butter).



PHONICS Spotlight on sounds

Beginning letter sounds get the spotlight when your child practices them in the dark.

Ingredients: flashlight



Get a flashlight, and sit together in a darkened room or outside at night. Name a letter, and ask your child to shine the flashlight on something that starts with that sound. For example, he might spotlight a sock or a swing for S. Then, trade roles, and let him say a letter for you to shine a spotlight on.

Variation: Name a short word (*cat*), and have your youngster find objects whose first letters spell it (*C*ouch, *a*pple, *t*able).

MEASUREMENT

Does your child know how much his backpack weighs? Have him weigh himself with the backpack and without it. Then, he can subtract the second weight from the first one. Say he weighs 75 pounds with it and 70 without. That means his backpack weighs 5 pounds ($75 - 70 = 5$).



Congratulations!

We finished _____ activities together on this poster.

Signed (parent or adult family member)

Signed (child)