



## Parenting the Preschooler

### Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

# What have you seen your child do to solve problems with others?

#### Ages & Stages

**PRESCHOOLER** A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

**YOUNG CHILD** A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

#### Minding Our Language

**Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.**

Preschool-aged children spend a lot of time playing with and talking to other children and adults. They are getting better at telling others what they think and feel, but they have a lot of disagreements, too.

Adults often think they need to jump in and solve disputes among preschoolers. When this happens, the children miss out on a chance to learn to solve problems on their own. In fact, young children often have great ideas for solving their own problems. One of the most important skills young children need to learn is that problems can be worked out peaceably instead of by fighting. Your child needs to be able to do many things to solve disagreements without fighting.

Skills your child needs include:

- **Communication:** Your child needs to be able to tell others what they want and need, and why.
- **Listening:** They need to be able and willing to listen to what others want and need.
- **Managing Feelings:** Your child needs to be able to calm themselves enough to talk and listen.
- **Empathy:** They need to be able to think about the feelings of others.
- **Compromise:** Your preschooler needs to be willing to give up a little bit of what they want so that other people can be happy too.
- **Creativity:** Your child needs to be able to think about new ways to solve problems.

Keep the following ideas in mind to help your child learn to fix problems with ideas, instead of arguments:

- Enforce rules about not hurting others or damaging their own or other people’s property.
- Help everyone be calm, including yourself!
- Ask each child involved in a disagreement to take turns describing the problem as they see it.
- After each child’s description, have the other child repeat back what they heard.
- Repeat what you heard each child say, using their words as much as possible.
- Remind your child of a similar situation and ask if they remember how they handled it before.
- Ask the children to share their ideas for how to solve the problem. Let the children know that you will list all of the ideas before all of you work together to pick the best one.
- Talk about the good and bad side of each idea.
- Find an idea both children can agree on.
- Talk about things to try or words to use next time so they can

## Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at [www.extension.msu.edu](http://www.extension.msu.edu).

**Extension Extras** (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

**Extension Extras Enrichment Kits** (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

**Early Childhood Videos** (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

**Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children** (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

*Parenting the Preschooler: Social Competence and Emotional Well-Being* © 2021 Michigan State University Board of Trustees. The fact sheets in this series may be copied for purposes of 4-H and other nonprofit educational programs and for individual use with credit to Michigan State University Extension.