



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How do you teach your child to be a good listener?

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.

Many preschoolers are good at talking but have not learned how to be good at listening. Young children do not have a lot of patience yet and may find it hard to pay attention to what other people are saying. Being a good listener is hard work – it takes a lot of time and practice. Teach your child how to listen, and they will have this valuable skill forever.

Try some of the following ways to help your child learn to be a good listener:

- Show them how to be a good listener by paying attention and looking at them when they talk to you. It will show them that you value what they have to say.
- Let your child know you understand by saying their words back to them. (*“You are mad because you can’t find your doll.”*)
- Ask them a question with no right answer and then listen to what they have to say. Stay quiet until they have stopped talking.
- Ask questions to understand what you think you heard. (*“It sounds like you want me to play with you right now. Is that what you want?”*)
- Find a time every day to talk one-on-one with your child, even if it is only for two minutes. Bedtime is a great time for talking!
- Listen with your eyes, your ears, your head, and your heart!

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.

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/38XW4KI>) – 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.

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