

# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

November 2010

## SHORT NOTES



### "I wonder..."

Curious youngsters are eager to learn new things. You can spark your child's curiosity by wondering aloud. In the car, you might say, "I wonder why stop signs are red." Then, talk about the possibilities (they're easy to see, they match red lights). Encourage her to ask questions, too ("What do you wonder about?").

### A thankful turkey

This craft will remind your child to be thankful. Have him cut several different-colored feather shapes from construction paper. On each, he can write one thing he's grateful for. *Examples:* parents, dog, good food. Then, let him draw a turkey's face on a paper plate and glue on the feathers. He can read his "turkey" aloud at Thanksgiving dinner.

### Staying safe

Your youngster has probably learned not to talk to strangers. But does she know to tell a trusted adult if someone bothers her—whether she knows the person or not? She should let you know if anyone touches her in a way that makes her uncomfortable or asks her to keep a secret that she doesn't like.

### Worth quoting

"Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm."

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

## JUST FOR FUN

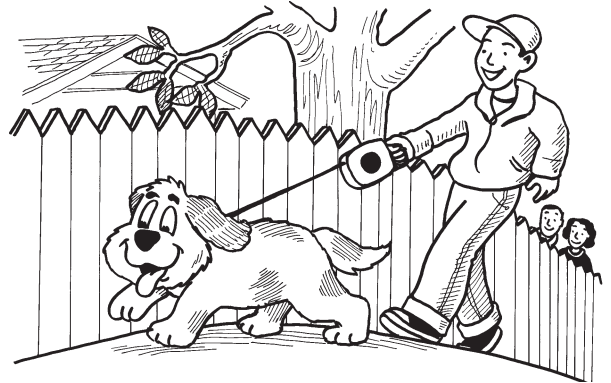


**Q:** What is black and white and pink all over?

**A:** An embarrassed zebra.

## How much responsibility?

Jackson, a first-grader, puts his laundry in the hamper and brushes his teeth without being asked. Lily, a fourth-grader, entertains her little sister at the store and helps her mother put away groceries. How do you know which responsibilities your youngster might be ready for? Consider these areas.



### My needs

Your child's first responsibilities probably involved taking care of his own needs (eating, dressing). As he gets older, he can do more for himself. For example, he might pick out his clothes and make his snack. These tasks will be easier if he keeps his closet and drawers organized and you store snacks where he can reach them.

### My behavior

Teach your youngster to take responsibility for his actions. Say he blames a friend when he's caught talking in class ("She talked to me first!"). Point out that

he's responsible for his own behavior. Then, ask how he might react next time (look away from his friend, talk to her at lunch or recess instead).

### My home

Explain to your child that he should do his chores without being reminded. It may help to assign jobs that fit into his schedule. For instance, he might make his bed in the morning, walk the dog after school, or straighten up the family room before bed.

*Tip:* Try to notice when your youngster acts responsibly ("Thanks for putting your plate in the dishwasher without being asked").♥

## Ready for conferences

Attending parent-teacher conferences is an important way to learn about your youngster's progress. Here are answers to questions you might have.

**What can I expect?** The teacher will probably go over your child's report card. You'll learn how she's doing in each subject and may also hear about her behavior and social skills.

**What questions should I ask?** Find out what you can do at home to help your youngster. If she's struggling in any areas, ask how to follow up with the teacher.

**What should I tell my child?** Explain that you and her teacher work together to help her do her best. Share what the teacher said, including what she's doing well and things she needs to focus on.♥



# Inside a spelling list

Exploring how words are formed can help your youngster become a better speller. These steps will let her build new spelling skills as she works on her weekly words:

**1.** Suggest that she figure out what her spelling words have in common. First, have her write each one on a separate slip of paper. Then, she can look for ways to group them. *Example:* "Lighting,"



"mighty," and "frightening" each contain "ight." Or she could sort them by number of syllables ("lighting" and "mighty" have two syllables) or endings ("lighting" and "frightening" both end in "ing").

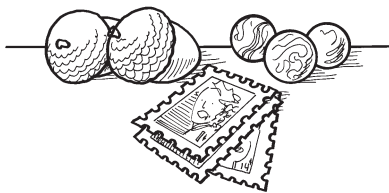
**2.** Once your child has identified several different groupings, ask her to choose one. She can glue the words in columns onto a sheet of paper. Hang the paper on the refrigerator or in her room where she can see it all week.

**3.** Encourage her to look at road signs and in newspapers and magazines for interesting words that fit her categories. She can add them to her paper in the correct columns (*example:* "knight" and "unsightly" go in her "ight" group).♥

# A family collection

Are you looking for a way to spend time with your family doing something that everyone enjoys? Try starting a collection together.

● **Decide what to collect.** You might choose stamps, items from nature (acorns, pinecones), or marbles. Making a family decision will teach your child to consider others' ideas and to compromise.



● **Maintain your collection.** You could put natural objects in a clear plastic storage tub, marbles in a jar, or stamps in a photo album. Your youngster will practice organization skills as he helps maintain the collection.

● **Celebrate new finds.** Tell family members about new additions to your collection and why they're special ("My friend gave me this pinecone from his camping trip"). Contributing to your shared collection will teach your child teamwork.♥



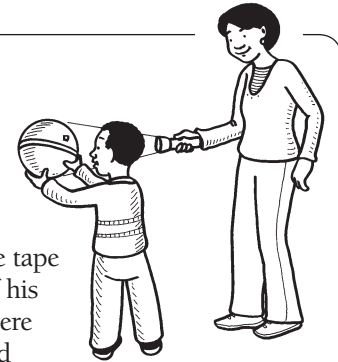
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Autumn days

Your youngster may have noticed that it's dark now when he wakes up. This science activity can help him understand why days are shorter in the fall.

Have him wrap masking tape around the middle of a basketball—the ball represents the Earth, and the tape is the equator. Let him hold the ball on the left side of his body with the top half (the Northern Hemisphere, where we live) tilted toward you. Then, turn off the lights and shine a flashlight (the sun) toward the ball as he slowly rotates it once with his hands. He'll see that when the Northern Hemisphere is tilted toward the sun (in spring and summer), the sun shines longer on our half.

Next, have your child keep the ball at the same tilt and carefully move it to his right side. Now when you shine the light toward the ball and he rotates it, the bottom half (the Southern Hemisphere) gets more light and the top half gets less. This shows why we have shorter days in fall and winter when the Northern Hemisphere is tilted away from the sun.♥



## Q & A Limit screen time

**Q:** *I try to limit the amount of time my children spend watching TV and playing video games. But they constantly ask for more. How can I get them to enjoy other activities?*

**A:** Experts recommend that youngsters spend no more than an hour a day in front of a screen, whether it's a TV, computer, or video game. Yet with handheld game systems, laptop computers, and cell phones everywhere, it can be tough to stick to the guideline.

Why not challenge your children to go "screen free" for one week? They may discover fun activities they've forgotten or new ones they want to try, which can encourage them to continue even when the week is over.



Together, brainstorm ideas. They might think of activities like jigsaw puzzles, hide-and-seek, finger painting, or scooter riding. Suggest that they refer to the list each day and try something different.♥

### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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