



Help Your Child Figure Things Out!

Your child was born to figure out how to solve problems! Your infant, toddler or preschooler is constantly discovering more and more about the way things work. It's an important part of mathematical thinking. The more you do now to strengthen your child's ability to look at things and figure them out, the better prepared he or she will be to start school. You can help. Try these suggestions:

YOUR INFANT:

- Hug, snuggle, kiss and talk to your baby. Play patty-cake and "This little piggy." Stimulating the senses prepares your child for the kind of thinking that will help him or her to solve problems later.
- Help your child to learn "cause and effect" with toys that squeak, rattle, light up, or play music when they are handled. You can also hide a toy under a blanket and let your baby find it.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Read to your toddler from books that ask questions or present puzzles. Talk with your child to help him or her figure out the answers.
- Give your child a paper bag and have a scavenger hunt. Say, for example, "Let's find something green" or "Let's find something soft." Pick up leaves outside and talk about how they differ. Use a magnifying glass to look at the leaves. Ask your child: "What trees did the leaves come from?"
- Play a listening game with your child where you close both your eyes and identify the sounds of things: cars, wind, footsteps, machinery, birds, and insects.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Let your preschooler play with objects that can be put together: simple puzzles, boxes of different sizes, Tinkertoys, Lincoln Logs, Legos, or blocks that stack. Get down on your child's level, ask what he or she is doing, and praise your child every time he or she makes something new.
- Take turns pretending to be an animal, while the other person has to guess which animal.
- Ask your child to help you set the dinner table. First, have your child count the number of people eating dinner. Then, have your child count the number of forks, spoons, and napkins needed.
- Ask questions to help your child to figure things out: "Are there enough cookies for everyone to have another one?"
- In the bathtub, help your child to see how different things sink or float in water: a sponge, a spoon, a toy boat, and a bar of soap.