

The Early Years

"In this time of extraordinary pressure, educational and social, perhaps a mother's first duty to her children is to secure for them a quiet growing time."

Two Duties of Parents

1. Form right habits of thinking and behaving
2. Nourish with loving, right, noble ideas

Form Right Habits

1. Basic Principles of Habit Training

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2. Top Three Habits

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Nourish with Loving, Right, Noble Ideas

1. Using the Senses and Free Play

2. Time in Nature

3. Books and Stories

4. Music and Art

5. Spiritual Life

6. Alphabet

7. Math

Encouragement and Advice from Moms Who Have Been There

Read more. Explore more. Play more. Praise God more. And don't even think about formal academics.

Let them get dirty; they are washable.

Let them help with chores. It is OKAY that the towels aren't folded "perfectly."

Take lots of time to cuddle with books, because they don't fit on your lap for long.

Start dealing with disobedience when they are young and explain to them why it is important.

Talk to them; don't underestimate the little ones' ability to understand.

Don't talk "baby talk" to them all the time. It may be cute when they are 2 and 3 but not as much when they are six and can't be understood by anyone but you! They need to hear the words pronounced properly while they are still learning how to form the words. Even if they can't get their mouths to form the words correctly, they will know what they are supposed to sound like from early on and it will help them get to the point of clear speech easier. It will also help them later on when they are trying to learn the sounds of the individual letters.

Teach them that Jesus wants to hear them and that they can and should pray and talk to him. Teach them now the importance of worship.

My number one piece of advice is to make sure you do "something" scheduled with them first, esp. if they have older siblings. This is so important, and it will set the tone for the rest of the day. Once that preschooler feels like their tank is "full" of mom, they are much happier.

Another wise thing to do is have special items for them to busy themselves with during school time. These things only come out during school and can be rotated with other "just school" items.

Read, read, read, and get them outside playing as much as possible. What I also have to remind myself is to sit on the floor and play with them, whatever they want to play. What I need to do can usually wait.

I also heard some wonderful words from an experienced mom that still touches my heart when I think of it. Instead of saying, "Enjoy them. They are only young once," she said, "The days are long, but the years are short." It recognized the difficulties that I face each day (and some days are more difficult than others), yet is a good reminder to stop and enjoy them. I often think of that when we are in the middle of a temper tantrum.

My last is almost 4 now, so we're still dealing. Amen to everything above, especially in the habits training area. So often we think they're too young, or not capable or unable to control themselves. If we don't expect much from them they won't give us much and then we'll be dealing with a headstrong, hard to control preschooler. (I know whereof I'm speaking!)

Teach them the Gospel early. From the minute they're born, include them in family Scripture reading and prayers.

Make time for them. If you are busy cooking or typing on the computer or reading or whatever and they come to you for something, no matter how small, stop and give them your full attention. But also teach them to respect your time. Set aside maybe 5 or 10 minutes a day to start with and teach them that it is Mom's Time to pray or read the Bible or practice an instrument and they are NOT to interrupt. They may sit by you, on your lap, whatever, but they must respect that time. Start with small amounts and work up until you can get a decent amount of study/spiritual time and they can SEE you do it, because the example is more powerful that way.

Pray for patience every day and then practice, practice, practice showing it.

...don't blink. They're gone so quickly.

Love them, Listen to them, and Let them be kids! The 3 L's in our home.

Set an example by what you do, not what you say, because you know they will catch that first.

For a piece of practical advice, I always encourage moms to keep a medical journal for each child. It doesn't need to be fancy. I just have a composition book for each child. All doctors and dentist visits are recorded as well as any medications and concerns or questions that I have. Thankfully my children are for the main part healthy, but I have still found my records to be valuable, and I also see that the doctors tend to be a little more respectful and take more time when they know you are recording data.

Don't purchase toys that need batteries.

Don't get caught up in any rivalry with other moms. Each child develops differently, so it's ok if your child doesn't do "A" yet, because he probably does "B" quite well.

I would say don't buy toys at all. They get heaps from other family members and my children don't play with them much anyway. Let them make, invent, construct everything themselves, even if it's a little rock with a face drawn on!

I find I'm much better off if I go to bed early and wake up early too.

Just enjoy them. There is plenty of time for academics, and they grow so quickly and then they go...