



Starting Strong Connection

Making Life Easier- Running Errands

Running errands (going to the bank, store, etc.) is one of those essential household routines that all families experience but it's not always an enjoyable activity for young children. There can be benefits in taking your young child along. He learns about his community while spending time with someone he loves and trusts, someone who can help him understand the world beyond home and family. However, running errands can be extremely difficult if the child has challenging behavior. It's not uncommon for families to feel overwhelmed by their child's challenging behavior and resort to only running errands when someone else can care for the child at home. Sometimes, depending on the errand (e.g., a long shopping trip, parent visit to the doctor), that might be the best strategy. Still there are steps you can take to help you and your child get the most out of these outings.

Provide a transition warning. It is a given that if you have a young child, she is going to have some trouble with transitioning from one activity/place to another. You might say, "Natalie, we have to go to the store in 5 minutes. When you are done with your puzzle, we can put your shoes on."

You might sing a song to assist with the transition, "This is the way we put on our socks" (tune of "This is the Way We Wash our Clothes.")

Tell your child where you will be going.

"Mikey, we are going to run two errands and then we'll be back to watch a video. First we are going to the bank. Then we are going to the post office. Then we'll come home and watch your video."

Some children need more concrete and visual support. Many parents have found great success with a travel book. This can be made with a small photo book. To make a travel book take photos of the places in your community that you frequent. Place each picture in a photo page. As you prepare to run your errands, place the photos of the places you will go in sequential order. (with home being the final page.)

Prepare a cooler with a snack, a drink and an ice pack. Keep the travel cooler in your kitchen so that it is visible and readily accessible. When filling the cooler, allow your child to decide what snack/drink will go in it. (Don't offer too many choices—2 or 3 at the most.)

Turn getting in the car seat into a game. Keep in mind that young children love being playful about everything and that from 18 months on up they are interested in doing things independently.

- Hop, skip and follow the leader to the car.
- Make up a song about buckling up. "This is the way we buckle up.."
- State the rule that the car cannot go until everybody has their seatbelt on.

Make your car a "child friendly" place.

- Keep an activity bin in the car. Rotate the contents every now and then. Allow you child to choose some of the contents.
- Play children's music CDs.
- Cool or heat the car in advance.

These simple tips can make getting in the car to run and errand much easier on your child. and you!

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The Journey of Mixed Emotions— Teaching Your Child To Become Independent with Daily Routines

Young children can learn how to do simple daily self-help activities- they just need to be taught what to do. When teaching a child to do self-care skills, you first need to know what you can typically expect of a young



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child, your child's skill level, and how to provide clear and simple instructions about how to do a task. In addition, providing children with ample encouragement that is both positive and specific will help promote their success. Children can

learn, at a very young age, how to independently wash their hands, brush their teeth, and get undressed and

dressed.

Young children like to feel independent, but sometimes they need a parent's encouragement to feel that they are capable and that adults believe that they "can" do it. Teaching independence with self-help skills like hand washing, brushing teeth, and dressing/undressing is an important step in development that can be achieved when children are taught how to do each step in each routine. Initially, it takes an adult's focused attention to teach children how to do these skills. Once the children learn how to do a skill independently, the adult can fade out of the routine completely.

Adapted from CSEFEL article by same name.

Try This at Home—When teaching your child independence in self-help routines

- Begin by getting down on your child's eye level and gaining his attention (i.e., touch your child gently, make eye contact, physically guide or jointly look at the same object.)
- Break down the routine into simple steps and state each step one at a time with positive and clearly stated directions. Sometimes we make the mistake of telling children what not to do or what they did wrong, such as, "Stop splashing the water." It is more effective and clear to say, "All done washing, now it time to turn off the water."
- To clarify steps even further, you could take a photo of each step in the routine and post it where the routine takes place. For instance, with hand washing, you could post photos above the sink. As you
- state one step at a time, show your child the photograph to illustrate what needs to be done.
- When teaching your child to do each step demonstrate how to do each step. After your child begins to learn the steps, you can take turns showing each other "how" to do the routine. Be prepared to provide your child with reminders about what to do. When learning a new skill it's common to forget a step and need assistance.

The Bottom Line

Remember, preschoolers are moving from the toddler stage, where much was done for them, to a new stage where they are becoming independent little people. Your child might need a bit of help or extra cueing when learning new skills. Your child might refuse to independently do daily routines because he/she wants your attention and inappropriate behavior got your attention in the past. Remember to ignore the challenging behavior and teach calmly and clearly while guiding him/her through the task.

See back page for developmental milestones of self-help by age



Growing Up Wild: Winter Wonderland

This winter, don't be discouraged by cold weather or gray skies: Take your family outside and create your own Winter Wonderland.

Track and Field: After the next new snowfall, head outside and look for fresh animal tracks. Can you see where squirrels, mice, rabbits, cats and birds have crossed the snow? Follow the tracks to see where they go.

Tips

1. Have your kids make a map of all the tracks they see covering one area. When you get home, have them use field guides to identify the tracks.
2. Spend some time analyzing the tracks. Can you tell a story to describe what happened here?

Ice Escapades: Take your little ones out when sun is melting the edges of your nearest puddle, and let them do some stomping! Kids love to hear ice squeak and

crack. Or let them break up chunks of icy snow and make a winter pizza!

Tips

1. This activity works best where ice has formed over water less than an inch deep. **Be safe and stay away from deeper ponds and streams.**
2. Give everyone a big stick to pound on frozen puddles.



Don't be discouraged by cold weather—take your family out-

From NatureRocks.org



Corner

Muffin tin math - Here is a tasty math activity, counting out chocolate chips into a muffin tin labelled with numbers.



I-spy Shapes - Play this traditional game but look for "...something shaped like acircle"

Bring me 5 - Choose a number, such as 5, then ask your little one to bring you 5 cars, 5 books, 5 blocks or 5 of anything they can easily carry!

Odd one out - Lay out 3 objects, 2 similar and 1 different and ask "Which is the odd one out!"

M&M patterns-Another tasty math activity—Create a pattern sequence using M&M's. Then have your child create the same pattern sequence.

Swing counting - Count aloud as you swing your preschooler at the park. When it's time to get off the swing count down from 10 to 1.

Hopscotch - Even preschoolers will enjoy helping to draw a hopscotch grid and then hop from number to number, forwards then backwards.

Number Match—Make up two sets of index cards. On one set write numbers from 1 to 10, or higher. On the other set, draw (or cut out from magazines) pictures of objects that correspond to the numbers of the first set. Lay all the cards on the table, face up, and have your child match each numbered card to the card with the corresponding number of objects.

Read more on FamilyEducation:

<http://fun.familyeducation.com/numbers/activity/36681.html#ixzz2n0jzRSd7>

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**Children who start early,
Start Strong.**



Routine Milestones—What to Expect from children by age

Children who are 3 often can:

- Help with brushing teeth
- Understand "now," "soon," and "later"
- Put dirty clothes in the hamper independently
- Get shoes from the closet
- Put on shoes without ties
- Enjoy singing easy songs
- Listen more attentively
- At times, prefer one parent over the other
- Enjoy playing house
- Imitate
- Match like objects
- Put non-breakable dishes in the sink
- Put trash in the trash can
- Wash body with help
- Wash and dry hands, though they may need some help reaching

Children who are 4 often can:

- Use a spoon, fork and dinner knife
- Dress without help, except with fasteners/buttons
- Learn new words quickly
- Recognize stop signs and their own name in print
- Follow two-step directions that are unrelated
- Understand simple clear rules
- Wash self in the bathtub
- Brush teeth independently
- Wash and dry hands.
- Share and begin taking turns

Children who are 5 often can:

- Follow established rules and routines (e.g. wash hands before eating, put dirty clothes in the hamper, brush teeth before going to bed.)
 - Independently initiate a simple routine (e.g. dress and undress, brush teeth and take bath without adult watching)
 - Be independent with most self-care.
 - Begin understanding others' feelings.
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