

Short Tips on

How to Be

a Better Parent



COUNTRYSIDE
DAY SCHOOL

Prenatal

1. Sing and read out loud to your child when you are pregnant.

A newborn has long-term verbal memory and will be soothed by the songs and books that were habitually heard while in the womb.

2. Take any steps necessary to reduce chronic stress when pregnant.

Your perceptions of your environment including emotions and behaviors are chemically communicated to your fetus through the placenta. This preprogramming is preparing your child for survival after birth.

3. Prepare for collaborative communication with your newborn.

Your early relationship with your child directly shapes the development of her brain structure and functions. Be prepared to immediately and consistently respond to signals from your infant. Consider addressing the transformative nature of parenting beforehand. Seek outlets and support for your emotional needs (e.g., social support from partner, friends, mother's club members, therapist, etc.), your physical needs (e.g., alone time, sports, etc.) and your productivity needs (e.g., job, volunteering, hobbies, etc.)

4. Create a home environment that is enticing for the senses and movement.

The young brain develops these two areas first - first the senses and then movement. Among other things, avoid using devices that inhibit mobility (e.g., crib, high chair, play pen, swing, and activity saucer) because of the importance of independence and movement in your child's developing brain.

Prenatal

5. Set up a nursery that optimizes early learning.

Remember the importance of consistency and structure in your child's early life and plan the room accordingly to accommodate your child for a whole year. Start the process of creating a nursery by sitting on the floor and observing the space from your child's perspective - note the sounds, lighting, and aesthetics of the room. If you paint the room, choose a soothing color. Instead of opting for murals and wallpaper, place small pictures and paintings at your infant's eye level. Try to avoid clutter and objects that can result in over stimulation.

Prenatal

0 to 6
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Zero to Six Months

1. Develop consistent daily routines and structure.

This will allow your child to make sense of his new and complicated world. The predictability of the day-to-day routine (e.g., feeding, sleeping, changing, bathing, etc.) will help your child trust in himself and his surroundings.

2. Honor your child's internal rhythms.

In particular, try to not wake your sleeping baby. Sleep at this age is very important to the development of your child's mind and body.

3. Use caution in introducing pacifiers because they are habit forming and may not be readily accessible when needed.

A child's dependency on an object that is habitually in the mouth may inhibit language development and keep your child inwardly focused. Guide your child to his thumb or fingers instead.

0 to 6
M**4. Breastfeed your child, if at all possible.**

Children benefit from the close, tactile, emotional bond created by breastfeeding. It is important that you make your child the priority during this time. Turn off the television and telephone and be consistent about the place of feeding. The connection you develop during feeding will provide your child with optimism and trust in the world and also serves to strengthen his immune system.

5. Provide “tummy time” for your child twice daily for 15 to 20 minutes.

Place your child on a comfortable surface and help her roll onto his stomach. This will strengthen her back, arms, and core muscles in preparation for future movement such as crawling and walking.

6 to 12
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Six to Twelve Months

1. Buy toys that are made of natural materials

And aid in sensorial and motor development such as those that stack, assemble, and require interaction (versus just allow passive observation).

It is best to avoid toys with lights and music because the brain of a young child cannot process more than one sensory experience at a time.

2. Speak in a clear, kind tone with your child.

It is important that you look at your child when talking. When your child begins to babble, be responsive to his language but refrain from using baby talk. Babies benefit from singing, early reading (board books), and playing games that resemble the give and take of conversations, such as peek-a-boo.

3. Provide a small chair and table for eating when your child is able to sit up.

Eating at the table is one of the first steps of independence and the start of the ritual of family meals.

Twelve to Eighteen Months

12 to 18
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1. Avoid interrupting your child when he is focused.

Interruptions teach a child to be distracted. Your child's concentration will cultivate self-discipline and creativity.

2. Offer your child a potty when he starts sitting up on his own.

Keeping detailed notes of urination times may help you guide your child to the potty when needed. Other than in the bathroom, you may want to have a potty in a central location where your child spends the most time such as the family room.

3. Avoid rewards (e.g., gold stars, candy, etc.) and punishments when potty training. Your child will use the potty when he is ready if it is easily accessible. This independence will add to his growing self-confidence.

4. Stop your child's disorderly behavior and redirect his energy whenever it arises. It is important that this be handled firmly, but kindly. At this age, it can often be done by distracting your child and diverting his attention to other matters. When your child is having a conflict with another child, verbalize the issue in a simple, short, non-judgmental fashion to help resolve it.

18 M
to 3 Y

Eighteen Months to Three Years

1. **Slow down and work at your child's pace.**

Try not to over schedule the day. Allow your child to fully absorb his activities.

2. **Your child may choose to play alone or prefer parallel play (play in the same area with another child but not directly interface).**

Be aware that older siblings/children may be frustrated by this orientation.

3. **Provide limits and structure for your child.**

For your child to feel secure, he must experience clear, consistent and appropriate expectations, guidelines, feedback, and follow-through. It is important that parents agree about expectations and support each other in enforcing them.

4. **Limit television watching, even in the background.**

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children two and under should not be exposed to television.

5. **Have your child share in the household work.**

This may include activities such as washing dishes, cooking, dusting, sweeping the floor, folding clothes, and watering plants. Showing your child how to participate as a productive member of the family

18 M
to 3 Y

and community sends an important message about his value and the importance of his contributions.

6. Have a designated place for everything used by the child and help your child to return items when her tasks are completed.

Remember, external order promotes internal order. Have small baskets and trays to display toys, tools, and work with just a few small items per basket. Simplify and store extra toys in the closet to be rotated every two weeks.

7. Promote language and emotional development by engaging in meaningful conversation using specific, accurate speech and precise vocabulary.

Be sure to listen and elaborate on what your child is saying.

8. Set up a reading area.

Have 4 or 5 nicely illustrated, well-written, non-fiction books displayed with covers facing your child (children have a hard time recognizing books by their spines). Incorporate reading time into everyday routine.

9. Have an arts and crafts area where there is a low table and accessible art supplies.

Art activities promote creativity as well as the development of fine motor skills, perceptual organization, sequencing, and analytic thinking

10. Enjoy nature together.

Spend time outdoors exploring plants, insects, and rocks. Your child will be fascinated by what the world has to offer.

11. Try not to explain things in too much detail.

Your child is in the sensorial period of learning so his learning is optimized by hands on experiences.

18 M
to 3 Y

3 to 6
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Three to Six Years

1. Enroll your child in school.

Your child is gaining a much better understanding of himself and his surroundings. Building a community outside of the family is important for your child's growing sense of self and the development of his social skills.

2. Encourage home activities that strengthen the hand for writing.

Puzzles, sewing, gardening, molding clay, cleaning, and finger painting all help this endeavor.

3. Show your child your interest and curiosity in the world.

Your questions will stimulate your child's own thoughts, ideas, and choices.

4. Only keep adults in your life who are positive role models for your child.

5. Be a model of courtesy, acceptance, and kindness towards others.

Participate in community service projects particularly when children can be involved. Teach your child about other cultures by introducing him to other countries through books, products, cooking, literature, people, celebrations, and rituals.

6. Provide unconditional love and avoid rewards and punishments.

3 to 6
Y**7. Be careful not to talk to others in his presence as though he is not there.**

Allow your child to answer the questions that are presented to him by others as well as questions concerning your child that are asked in his presence (assuming they address matters that he is able to answer).

8. Offer more freedom and more responsibility.

As your child's motor skills grow and allow for greater participation in your daily life, slowly offer him more freedom. When given freedom, a child is faced with making choices which is important in the formation of the intellect.

9. Treat errors kindly.

Mistakes and accidents are usually sign that your child is practicing new skills or testing his limits. Being understanding towards errors encourages a child to keep trying.

10. Learn to observe your child.

It is important that you and your home environment change with each new stage of your child's development. Take a few minutes every day to notice the small details of your child's life. You may want to journal and discuss your observations with your partner. Your reflections on matters such as your child's emotional development, physical needs, changing eating habits, academic interests, likes and dislikes, friends, activities around the house, and sibling dynamics will prepare you to support your child's constant development.

3 to 6
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11. Continue to encourage and allow your child to participate in age-appropriate household jobs so that he will develop a sense of confidence and feel like he is a contributing member of your family.

12. Promote lifelong learning by searching for knowledge and scientific truths with your child.

Visit libraries, museums, aquariums, and science centers. Take tours of bakeries, fire stations, candy factories or whatever is of interest.

13. Include storytelling in your family's daily routine.

Your child will love to hear stories about your childhood, your family's origin, and your daily events.

14. Establish family times and family rituals.

Meals together are important to the social fabric of your family and establishing healthy eating habits.

15. Assure that your child has some quiet, unscheduled, and uninterrupted time.

This allows your child to establish his own internal world and develop his own stream of consciousness. Due to your child's growing understanding of himself and the world around him, he is able to reflect on activities and events of the day with depth and focus.

An Invitation to You

The next
Step

Please accept my invitation to visit Countryside Day School for a personal tour with me, Karen O'Malley, Admissions Director. At CDS we inspire and prepare students to think and do for themselves, discover their own path to success and learn the value of contributing to their community as they transition from children, to adolescents, to adults. Once you visit, you'll see how a community of like-minded people can create an amazing educational environment for your child.

Karen O'Malley
Director of Admission

[Schedule a Tour](#)