



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How does your child ask for help?

Ages & Stages

PRECHOOLER A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

YOUNG CHILD A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

Minding Our Language

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.

You have probably noticed that your child wants and needs less help with many things now that they are getting older. Preschoolers want to do things on their own and might get frustrated when they can't. They often get upset because they think they can do something better than they actually can, or they want things to turn out the same as when someone else does it.

It is important to encourage your child to do some things on their own and to teach them to ask for help when they are getting frustrated. Learning when to ask for help is part of the process of learning how to handle strong feelings, solve problems, and develop self-confidence.

Try some of the following tips for teaching your child how to ask for help:

- Let them try things on their own. If you jump in and do a task for them whenever they run into trouble with it, they may think that they are not good enough to do it themselves, or that trying new things isn't important.
- Offer to help. (*“Can I help you?” “Do you need some help?” “What can I do for you?”*) If they say no, listen to them and step back.
- Encourage them and talk about what you see. (*“You worked hard to put your socks on. Can I help you straighten the toes?”*)
- Help them problem-solve. (*“What could you do differently next time?”*)
- Give choices. For example, if your child can't reach something ask them if they would like you to get it or if they need their stool so they can reach the object themselves.
- Set limits. If putting shoes on is still too hard for your child, tell them they can put their clothes and socks on, but you will help to put their shoes on.
- Help them use words to describe how they are feeling and what they need. Teach your child to say, “I am frustrated” or “I need help.”
- Praise your child when they ask for help. (*“You asked for help to solve your problem! That was good thinking!”*).

Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at www.extension.msu.edu.

Extension Extras (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

Extension Extras Enrichment Kits (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

Early Childhood Videos (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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