



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

What do you do when your child interrupts?

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.

It is very common for preschoolers to interrupt. They still see everything only from their own point of view, so it is hard for them to imagine that what they have to say isn't more important than what others are saying. They also like to have your complete attention all of the time and are not very patient yet. They do, however, need to learn that it is rude to interrupt.

To help teach your child not to interrupt, there are many things you can try.

- Label when they are interrupting you. (*“I am talking right now, please do not interrupt me.”*)
- Teach your child when, if ever, it is okay to interrupt you. This might be when someone is hurt or during another emergency.
- Redirect their attention. Have a special box of quiet toys that come out only when you need your child to stay quiet while you talk on the phone or to a friend.
- Ignore demands for your attention. Even repeatedly asking your child to stop interrupting might be giving them the attention they are after.
- Help your child feel important, even when other people are around and have your attention. Try holding their hand, touching their head, or winking just for them!
- Tell your child you will hold their hand until you are ready to listen to them. When it is your child's turn, give their hand a squeeze and give them your attention.
- Be a good listener. Let your child see that there is a time to talk and a time to listen.
- Be patient when your child talks. Sometimes they may not be able to think of the words they want to use fast enough. Give them time to remember.
- Teach your child to use good manners by saying “excuse me” when you are talking to others.

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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