



# ***12 Things***

***You Can Do To  
Help Your Child  
Succeed in School  
and Beyond***





# 12 Things

## **You Can Do To Help Your Child Succeed in School and Beyond**

The first five years — from birth to age 5 — are the most important years in your child's development. Your child's early experiences help prepare them for school and beyond.

More than anything else, your relationship with your child shapes the way your child grows. The good news is you have all the tools you need to support early learning and development. Try these **12 Things** — easy actions to support your child's development.



## **1. Interact and Engage Often**

Children want to connect with you. The more interaction a child has, the healthier their development will be. Every opportunity to engage with your child supports their learning.

**Respond to your baby's smiles, coos and babbling with conversation.**

**Create a bedtime routine that can include talking, reading, singing and snuggling with your child.**

**Get down to your child's level when you talk and play with them.**

**Juggling work and family can be challenging, so take the time to engage with your child as much as you can.**



## 2. Make Reading a Priority

Reading promotes early language skills. It's never too early to start reading with your child.

Read to your child every day. Make it part of your daily routine.

While you read, encourage your baby to explore books with all senses. Let them touch and turn pages and even put books in their mouth.

Ask your child questions about the stories and pictures.

Write down a story that your child tells you. Show them their words in writing.

Check out your public library or park and recreation center for free books and activities like story times.



### **3. Touch and Hold Your Children**

All children need physical affection to be emotionally healthy and ready to learn.

Touch is the first language babies learn. Kiss and cuddle your baby every day.

Massage your baby. Gently rub her body in soft, repeated motions.

Hold your child when introducing her to new situations or when meeting new people.



## **4. Talk and Listen to Your Child**

Children start to learn languages from the moment they are born. Communicating with your child promotes early language, reading and thinking skills. The more words a child hears from you, the better.

**Talk to your baby early and often. Babies like a sing-song voice and big facial expressions.**

**Narrate your day. Talk about what you are seeing, doing, hearing or feeling. Talk about what your child is seeing, doing, hearing or feeling.**

**Use your home language. Children can learn many languages in their early years.**

**Engage your child in conversation. Listen and ask questions.**





## **5. Encourage Art, Music & Dance**

Art, music and dance are great ways for your child to express feelings and show individuality. They also support your child's learning through new experiences and new ways to think.

Help your child make music using household items, such as beating on a pot or plastic container, clapping spoons or rubbing sticks together.

Play music in your home. Sing, clap and dance with your child.

Encourage your child to draw and be creative. You don't need a lot of fancy materials — a pen and some scrap paper can be endless fun!





## 6. Play

Playing is critical for your child's development. When children play, they gain valuable physical, social and thinking skills.

Encourage your baby to explore toys and other items by touching, holding, banging and making noise.

Make playtime a part of every day.

Be your child's playmate. Let your baby choose and lead your play together.



## **7. Help Your Child Feel Secure**

Children feel secure when they receive predictable, loving care. Children who feel safe and secure can better cope with stress and are able to explore the world around them.

**Recognize your baby's cues.** Learn to understand when they need to be held, talked to, looked at or want quiet time.

**Be responsive.** Respond to your baby when they are upset and when they are happy.

**Establish daily routines** for mealtime, naps, bedtime and other activities.

**Set things up** so that your child can safely explore their surroundings.



## 8. Support Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is important for a child's well-being and can help them take on new challenges.

Support your baby's developing skills. Notice when they are trying to learn a skill (like crawling to a toy) and support their efforts.

Praise your child for trying new things and encourage them to try again.

Focus on good behaviors. Gently correct their mistakes and set limits.

Help your child understand who they are. Talk to them about their likes and dislikes.



## 9. Teach about feelings

Emotional well-being helps children cope with transitions and respond to stressful situations.

Comfort your baby when she is upset. You can't spoil a baby.

Talk about feelings. Help your child use words to describe feelings.

Try to be a good role model for managing emotions. If you get upset about something, talk about why.

Empathize with your child's feelings. It's normal for your child to have strong feelings that result in crying and tantrums.

When your child is calm, talk about how they can cope with big feelings in the future.



## **10. Promote Health and Safety**

There are many ways to help your child grow up healthy and stay safe.

**Childproof your home.**  
Make sure you have a first-aid kit on hand.

**Use the right car seats**  
for your child's age.

**Stay up-to-date on immunizations.** See the doctor and dentist regularly.

**Provide your child nutritious meals.**

**Encourage outdoor, active play.**



## 11. Choose Quality Child Care

Finding a quality child care setting is important to support development and learning.

Visit the child care center with your child to see if it is a good fit for your child. When visiting, ask yourself:

Is it a clean, safe and healthy environment?

Are there toys and materials for learning that fit your child's age?

Do educators learn about child development and early education?

Do educators play on the floor and have conversations with the children?

Do children and educators seem to enjoy each other?

Do educators welcome your involvement?



## **12. Take Care of Yourself**

Sometimes being a parent can be overwhelming and exhausting. If you don't take care of yourself, you cannot take care of your child.

**Ask for help when you need it. Being a parent can be stressful.**

**If you're not feeling well, physically or mentally, check-in with your healthcare provider. Let them know what's going on.**

**Stay connected with friends and family. Don't be afraid to discuss how you are feeling with those you trust.**

**Look for opportunities to connect with others through parent groups, church or community organizations.**





# Help Me Grow

## Alameda County

**All parents have questions.  
Help Me Grow has answers.**

Help Me Grow is a free service for families with children birth to 5 years. We answer parents' everyday questions about their child's development, learning and behavior. Call to get information, tips and learn about early childhood resources near you!



**888-510-1211**

**MONDAY-FRIDAY**

**9AM-5PM**

**ALAMEDAKIDS.ORG**

\*Information taken from "10 Things Every Child Needs" DVD, produced by Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation.

Help Me Grow Alameda is supported by First 5 Alameda County. First 5 provides early childhood services, professional development and community support to children 0-5 so they are successful in school and life.

**WWW.FIRST5ALAMEDA.ORG**