



4-H School-Age Child Care  
University of California Cooperative Extension

# PARENT STYLES

## Tips for Busy Parents

### CHALLENGING CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL

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*Parents want their children to develop to their fullest potential. The question is how to appropriately challenge school-age children to stretch their skills without breaking their spirit.*

#### How can parents challenge children?

- ☆ **Help children advance one step at a time.** An example of this would be helping your child spell a word. Step 1. Ask your child how he thinks it should be spelled. Step 2. Suggest that you look the word up together. The next time: Ask how he would spell the word and then have him check the spelling in the dictionary. Offer your assistance only if he is unable to find the word.
- ☆ **Help children master skills.** Self-confidence has a ripple effect. When children feel capable in one area, the feeling is likely to spread to other areas. Assist your child to do well in many areas, such as arts & crafts, cooking, collecting, gardening, and household chores.
- ☆ **Challenge children by asking leading questions.** These are questions that help your child think about the next step or a different way to accomplish something.

- ☆ **Introduce children to play activities with varying degrees of difficulty.** Use a variety of activities, such as puzzles, games, play dough, modeling and ceramic clay. When a child is using new toys or materials, be available to help as needed. Make substitutions if he becomes frustrated. The toy, game or activity may be beyond his capability.

#### What else should parents consider?

- ☆ **Provide as little assistance as necessary.** Help your child be successful. Give enough support to avoid frustration that would break the child's spirit. Too much or too little help can make a child feel inadequate.
- ☆ **Use praise and rewards.** Praise tells a child you like his/her action. To be effective, praise must be honest, immediate, and specific. Some children respond better to rewards. Rewards can be tangible or intangible. Stickers, special privileges, or sugarless gum are examples of tangible rewards. A special time with a parent is an example of an intangible reward.

Resource: School-Age Notes, July/August 1985

*Crary, E. Kids Can Cooperate, Parenting Press Inc., Seattle, Washington*

## Make Time For Play

Play is a marvelous way to challenge children's potential. The game or activity is not important in itself. Choose a variety of inside and outside activities. By doing so, your child has the chance to develop creativity and new skills, and have fun doing things together.

Try one or more of these ideas with your children:

- Puzzles - Large, time-consuming jigsaw puzzles
- Games - Scrabble, Monopoly, Clue, etc
- Clay models:

### What You'll Need:

- \*2 cups baking soda
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 1 1/4 cups cold water

Saucepan  
Tray

Damp Cloth  
Waxed Paper  
Cookie cutters  
Paint



### What to Do:

- ☆ Combine all ingredients in saucepan until smooth.
- ☆ Bring to boil and boil one minute, stirring until clay is the consistency of mashed potatoes.
- ☆ Pour out onto a tray and cover with damp cloth until cool.
- ☆ Knead lightly (knead in a few drops of food coloring, if desired).
- ☆ Use immediately or store, wrapped airtight, in refrigerator. Warm to room temperature before using.

This clay can be molded into shapes or containers, or rolled on waxed paper and cut with cookie cutters. When dry, it can be painted.

\*Mixture intended for crafts only.