

# Caring for Kids



## Ready for Group Time

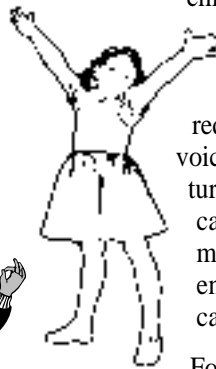
The most successful group times begin with an activity that gets children into the right mood. A good group time activity at this time has two important features:

1. Gets the children moving around.
2. Calms the children down at the end, so they are ready to pay attention.

“Rise and Shine” is a fine game to introduce circle time. Children pretend to be asleep. Move among them and test how relaxed they really are. At the



sound of an alarm, they jump up and move quickly to another place, where they pretend to fall asleep again. If you have regular places for the



children in the circle ask them to “sleep” on them for your last request. Using your voice softly and turning down the lights can create a relaxing mood. This activity ends with children calm and quiet.

For more great ideas like this one ask your Cooperative Extension Agent to borrow the book “Follow Me Too” by Mariane Torbert and Lynne B. Schneider from the County Resource Library. ■

## Watch out for Button Batteries

Tiny button batteries are becoming more and more common in watches, toys, computer games, and musical cards. If a child swallows a button battery, immediate medical attention is necessary. In most cases an x-ray is required.

Never permit babies or toddlers to play with toys that are powered by button batteries. Battery powered toys are designed for older children. Secure battery compartments with tape. Keep all replacement batteries locked away, and dispose of old batteries immediately. If you suspect that a child has swallowed a button battery, immediately call your poison control center or the 24-hour National Button Battery Ingestion Hot Line (202) 625-3333. ■

**telephone help line for  
child care providers**

Do you have questions about caring for other people's children, such as...

- How do I get children to eat?
- Why won't children share?
- How do I stop a child from biting other children?
- What do I do when a parent doesn't pay in time?
- Where do I call to find out how to become a registered child care provider?

**You're not  
alone . . .**

Telephone Help line

**Call Toll Free  
1-800-859-8340**



# S N A C K S

## Special Spring Snacks

### Bird's Nests

carrots (1/2 per child)

vanilla yogurt

seedless grapes or raisins

Wash grapes. Peel and wash carrots. Cut in half. Older children can grate their own carrots. An adult should grate carrots for younger children.

Mix grated carrot with a small amount of yogurt until moist. Place the mixture on a small plate. Push the back of a spoon into the middle of the carrot mixture to form a "nest." Let the children place seedless grapes or raisins in their nests for "eggs."

Be aware that infants and young children can choke easily on some foods, such as nuts, popcorn, fruit seeds or pits, grapes, pieces of hot dogs or bacon, and some raw vegetables, such as carrots and celery. Using grated or finely chopped foods may reduce the risk of choking.

### Ladybug Treats

whipped cream cheese spread

food coloring

oval crackers

raisins

Add several drops of yellow and red food coloring to the cream cheese to make it an orange color. Spread the cream cheese on the crackers. Let the children place raisins on the cream cheese for ladybug spots.

### Bugs on a Log

Make logs from any of these foods:

celery stalks (cut to about 3" in length)

apples (cut in halves or quarters and remove core)

carrot sticks (cut to about 3" in length)

Top logs with a spread such as one of these:

cream cheese and pineapple

cheese and pimiento

peanut butter

egg salad

Have the children sprinkle any of these "bugs" on the spread:

raisins

dry cereal

nuts

sunflower seeds

Be aware that infants and young children can choke easily on some foods, such as seeds, nuts, popcorn, fruit seeds or pits, pieces of hot dogs or bacon, and some raw vegetables, such as carrots and celery. Using grated or finely chopped foods may reduce the risk of choking.

### Kite Sandwiches

bread slices

cheese slices

Cut bread and cheese slices into triangles for kite shapes. Let the children put their bread and cheese slices together to make kite sandwiches. Add a kite string from one corner with a carrot stick or a pickle slice.

### Rainbow Parfait

vanilla yogurt or cottage cheese

colorful fruit (canned or fresh)

clear plastic cups

Alternate layers of yogurt or cottage cheese with layers of fruit in clear plastic cups.

### Sunshine Shakes

6 oz. frozen orange juice concentrate

3/4 cup milk

3/4 cup water

1 tsp. vanilla

Place all ingredients in a blender. Blend until frothy. Makes 4 (1/2 cup) servings.

### Deviled Egg Chicks

hard cooked eggs (1/2 per child)

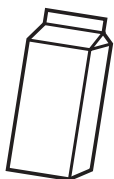
mayonnaise

mustard

raisins

small carrot pieces

Wash and peel a carrot. Cut into small pieces. After handwashing have the children help you to remove the shells from hard cooked eggs. Cut the eggs in half lengthwise. Scoop the egg yolks into a small bowl. Mash yolks with a fork. Add mayonnaise and mustard to taste. Fill the center of each egg white with yolk mixture. Place two raisins on the yolk mixture for eyes and a small piece of carrot for a beak.



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## “You’re Not Alone” Telephone Helpline Q&A

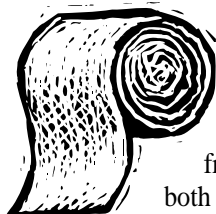
Here is some information from a recent call to the telephone helpline.

*Question:* How can I help families to toilet train their child?

*Answer:* The most important way to assist families is to help them learn to recognize the signs that a child is ready for toilet learning. Readiness includes the ability to walk and to say the words used in his or her family for

“peepee”, “poopoo” and “potty”. The child must be able to sit and stand, pull the pants up and down, and differentiate between being wet and dry and show awareness during a bowel movement. The ability to hold their urine for a period of 3 hours, such as during a nap is another important indicator. If you notice signs of readiness while the child is in child care, share this information with the parents. You can help parents learn other signs that their child is ready for toilet-training.

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Work closely with parents, making sure that you are using the same words and approaches that they are using at home. Let parents know how things are going at child care on a daily basis and ask for regular updates on toileting progress at home. When children are having numerous accidents and parents are becoming frustrated, your role is to help both parent and child to accept the accidents as a normal part of the process. It is not damaging to the child to stop toilet learning at times like these and try again at a later time.

As a child care provider, you are definitely NOT alone as you work hard to handle this and other questions on a daily basis. While there are no quick and easy answers, providers have found it helpful to talk about their concerns. Keep the help line number by your phone. Do not hesitate to call 1-800-859-8340. ■

## Talking with Toddlers

Talking with young children is the best way to help them to learn to speak for themselves. (Follow these tips for talking with toddlers and you’ll never find yourself without something to say.)

### *Talk about what is happening*

Toddlers are most interested in the here and now. Talk about what the child is looking at, such as a truck going past the window, or the other children at play. Describe what you are seeing, “Jason is putting the toys in the grocery cart . . . now he is pushing the cart.”

### *Read Aloud*

Toddlers enjoy when adults read aloud to them. Use sturdy books such as board, cloth and plastic books. The best way to



read to a group of children is to allow a small group to gather. Don’t worry if children get up and leave in the middle of the story. This is natural for children of this age and does not mean that they are not learning from story times. Allow some time for the children to hold the books and to turn the pages themselves.

### *Words can Replace tears*

Encourage the child to use words instead of tears to communicate. Give them simple words such as “No” and “Mine” and help them to use these words with other children and with you.

Talking with toddlers is the best way to prepare them to talk for themselves. ■

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## Weathering the Whiner



Whining is a very common behavior of children of all ages, but it is most common for three and four-year-olds. There are a number of reasons why children whine. The most common cause is fatigue. In some children, whining is a signal that they are getting a cold or other illness. In a few cases, the behavior may have been learned from another child or even an adult who got their way through whining.

Prevention is the first step, if a child is fussing, she may be helped by being directed to something interesting to do. If a child is tired, it helps to have a quiet place with soft cushions that you can encourage a child to use for a quiet activity. When a child begins whining, ignore the whining while encouraging this child to use a “grown-up voice” to ask for what they want. Say to the child, “I can help you when you use your grown-up voice.” This can help you to weather the whining and children learn that whining doesn’t mean winning their way. ■

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# Sprouting Spring



Even if there is snow on the ground outside, you can bring some spring inside with indoor gardening projects. The children will enjoy helping to care for the seeds and plants as they watch them grow.

Try growing vegetables in small pots in a sunny window. Easy ones are lettuce, onions, and radishes. Harvest your window garden and make a salad.

Start seeds in small pots indoors. As the weather gets warmer, have the children help you to move those plants outside to plant in the garden or in larger patio pots.

## Popcorn

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The next time you make popcorn, set aside ten unpopped popcorn kernels (before they go into the popper or microwave oven). Put those kernels in a bowl of water and soak them overnight.

The next day, remove the popcorn kernels from the water. Plant them in a large pot (10 inches or larger) of potting soil. Place the pot in a sunny window and keep it watered. Watch as the plants start to grow. When the plants begin to get crowded in the pot, pull out all but the strongest plant. It will need lots of room to grow. Keep the plant well watered in a sunny spot. If the weather is warm, you may want to move your popcorn plant outside in a sunny spot. Your popcorn plant should reach a height of about 5 feet tall!

## Water and Sun Experiments

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Use three small plants.

Give one plant water and sunlight (good care).

Give the second plant sunlight, but no water.

Give the third plant water, but no sunlight.

Talk with the children about what happens to each plant.

Set a plant in a sunny window. Turn the plant away from the sun. Watch what happens.

Place a small plastic bag over a leaf of a plant. Watch as moisture collects in the bag.

## Avocado Plants

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Choose a fresh, ripe avocado. Cut the fruit in half, removing the pit. (Use the fruit to make guacamole dip). Allow the pit to “rest” for a few days before putting it in water.

Insert four toothpicks around the middle part of the avocado pit. Place the pit into a container

# Sprouting Spring

of water. The toothpicks should rest on the lip of the container so only the bottom of the pit (the fat part) is in the water.

In a few weeks, roots will begin to grow. The pit can now be placed in a container of potting soil.

Place the bottom half of the pit in the soil. Water it lightly to keep it moist, but not wet. In one month you will have the beginning of an avocado tree.

## Guacamole Dip

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- 1 large ripe avocado
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 small onion, minced
- 1 small tomato, diced
- 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- Dash of garlic salt and chili pepper to taste

Remove the green peel from the avocado. Carefully cut the fruit away from the pit. (Save the pit to grow an avocado plant). Have the children mash the avocado in a bowl. Add other ingredients and mix well. Give each child his or her own bowl of dip and some fresh vegetables, tortillas, or chunks of bread for dipping.

## Hanging Carrot Basket

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Cut a two inch piece from the top of a thick carrot. Using a knife, carve out as much of the inside of the carrot as you can without splitting the carrot. This hole becomes a watering cup.

Stick four toothpicks around the cut edge of the carrot. Tie strings to the toothpicks to make a hanging basket.

Fill the hollow part of the carrot with water and hang in a sunny window. Keep the carrot cup filled with water. Watch each day to see a sunny surprise.

## Plant Pots

- Cut off an old nylon stocking (about 8-10 inches up from the toe).
- Put 1 teaspoon grass seed in the toe. Add about 1 cup potting soil.
- Tie a knot or use a twist tie to close the open end of the stocking.

Use waterproof markers to decorate stockings, adding facial features to create a creature. Set the creature in a margarine tub with water. Keep water in the margarine tub so the creature won't dry out. Set in a warm sunny window. Watch for the creature to grow green grassy hair!



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Better Kid Care  
Penn State University  
5 Armsby Building  
University Park, PA 16802

## TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Share your special tips on caring for children with other child care providers. Send your ideas to:

Caring for Kids Caregiver Tips  
Room 5 Armsby Building  
Penn State University  
University Park, PA 16802

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\* Indicates that book can be borrowed from the County Cooperative Extension Resource Library

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Project Director

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