



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS

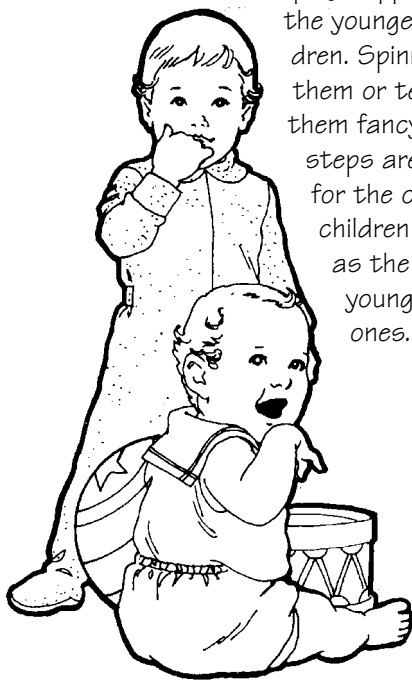


If you have more than one child and your children were not born in groups of twins, triplets, etc., you may often face the problem of meeting the needs of children of different ages. It can be hard to know what to do with children who are several years apart. Here are some winners. These ideas are both appealing and successful for children of different ages.

Music and Movement

Music activities are likely to be a big hit with children of all ages, and you'll have fun, too. Put on dance music and get everyone up and moving. Children also love to pretend to be animals so try to dance like an elephant or like a mouse. Babies love music and movement and even the youngest babies love to move to the music.

Music also gets older children to play happily with the younger children. Spinning them or teaching them fancy dance steps are all fun for the older children as well as the younger ones.



Outside Play

Most children are like flowers, they blossom when they are outside in the sunshine. Take the group and head to the park. Involve the older children in pushing the younger ones on the swing and take a picnic to share along with you. It works best if you bring something simple along with you that each age group enjoys, maybe sidewalk chalk for the school-age children to use to make a hopscotch game with, and for younger children to draw pictures, or a ball for the older children to play games with and the babies and toddlers to just throw around.

The exercise time tends to help children to be on the best behavior and reduces some of the teasing that can occur between the older and younger children.

Sand and Water

Sand and water play is a relaxing type of play that children can explore in different ways. Babies and toddlers love to see how sand and water feel on their bodies while preschoolers and school-age children enjoy creating and making imaginative worlds with their play. Toy washing is a great activity that leaves both you and the children feeling satisfied, nothing like making things nice and clean while playing.

Sand and water are good to introduce when children are having a bad day and need a fresh start, it calms everyone and gets them ready for other activities together.

Art

Painting is a messy but wonderful activity for children across the ages. Since the youngest children put everything in their mouths you can make a paint that is great for babies and toddlers by adding food coloring to sweetened condensed milk. Simply divide a can of milk into four parts and color each a different color with a few drops of food coloring. Let the baby and toddlers finger paint right on the high chair tray. Preschool children also enjoy finger painting and they like experimenting with making prints with kitchen tools, like potato mashers and spatulas. School-age children are becoming more interested in the product. They may enjoy working on their own exploring the way they can express their ideas on paper.

Cooking



Cooking is another great activity for children of different ages. Everyone can be involved the older children can crack the eggs, and even the babies can even stir up the batter with some help from you or an older child. Get all your ingredients together beforehand and be prepared for some mess, but if you are ready and willing this can be great fun for a group of children of different ages. One great way to get everyone involved is to use recipes that let children make their very own portion. This way there is less waiting, and each child can choose to make things the way she likes it.

PIZZA

Homemade pizza is a great project for children, just give each child a piece of dough and put out a number of toppings and let the children make

their own. Babies love to play with the dough.

¼ cup warm water
1 ¼-ounce package (1 tablespoon)
active dry yeast

A pinch of sugar
(for feeding the yeast)

1 T butter
1 cup milk
2 tsp sugar
½ tsp salt
3 cups (approx) all-purpose flour
vegetable shortening

Pour ¼ cup warm water into a large mixing bowl. Sprinkle ¼ ounce yeast and the pinch of sugar over the water. Stir, and then let the mixture stand for 5 minutes. Melt butter and add milk (make sure that it is not too warm for the yeast) then add to the yeast mixture. Add the sugar, salt and flour. Mix and if it is too sticky to handle add more flour. Knead the dough. Let rise

for an hour. Then use for pizza dough. If you want to make bread you can simply knead and let the dough rise a second time. Give each child a piece of dough and let them form in into a personal pizza. Place the dough on a greased baking sheet. Let the child select some toppings like cheese, tomato sauce, green peppers, olives, etc. Bake in 450° F oven for 10–16 minutes

APPLE SALAD

Try this apple salad recipe from *Cup Cooking* by Barbara Johnson and Betty Plemons, 1978 Early Educators Press, Ithaca, New York.

- ¼ apple cut apple into small pieces (even toddlers can cut with plastic knives)
- 4–5 inch piece of celery, cut celery into small pieces,
- add 8 raisins (older children can help younger ones to count)
- 1T fruit yogurt
- Mix well
- Offer substitutions like 1T crushed pineapple, or 1 T grated carrot

The Best Friends for Your Child

Are all of your children's friends the same age as he or she? We often think that the perfect friend for our child would be like them, and many parents choose child care because they offer same age groups. But the best friends your child could have are older and younger. Here's why:

1. Older children in a mixed-age group learn to be leaders, to nurture and share with others. We can't expect children to know how to care for and lead others unless we give them a chance.
2. Younger children learn from the older children. They learn language, and ideas and are able to participate in play and other activities that only older children can create.

Surprisingly, children of different ages actually share more easily and there is less bullying than when they play with children of the same-age. Mixed-age play is a win for both the older and younger child.

He or She? Him or Her?

Please note: In this and all Better Kid Care publications we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." When we use he or she, we include all children.

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