

Your Child and Animals

At three and a half, a child may love every four-footed creature. Or he may trust none of them. Or she may have feelings that range somewhere in between. Follow these tips to make experiences with animals safe and positive.

Thinking about a pet?

Child development experts suggest you "wait".

- ♥ There can be a lot of extra work for parents when there's a preschooler and a puppy in the household.
- ♥ A child of five or older has better reasoning and coping skills for helping with pet care.

Already have a pet?

Its care and comfort can be important health and safety issues.

- ♥ Make sure your pet has its rabies shots.
- ♥ Give your dog room to run. If you tie or coop it up in cramped quarters, it may become bad-tempered and hurt a playful child.
- ♥ Don't leave a three-and-a-half year-old alone with a pet. Playing too rough could result in a scratch or bite.

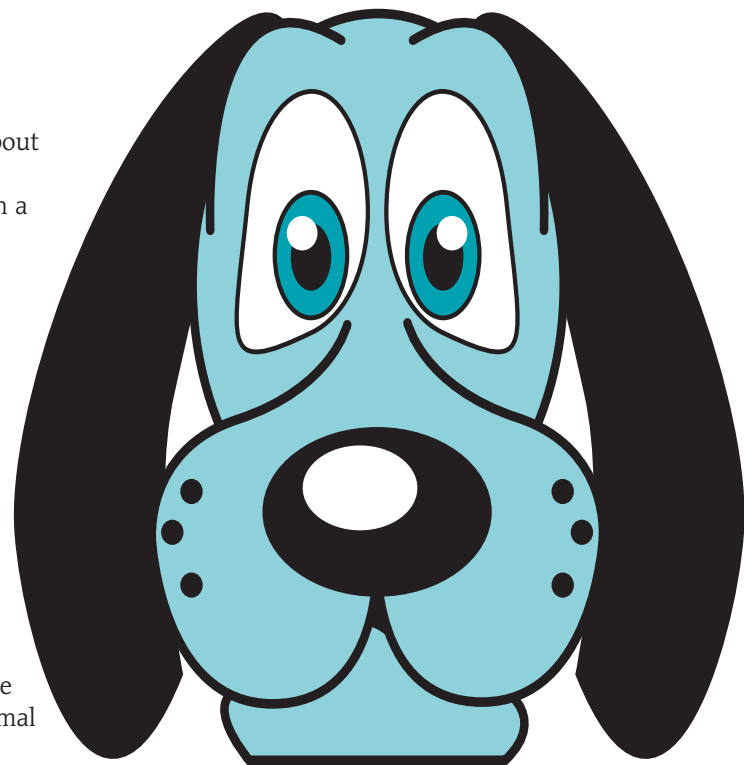
Teach your child these pet rules:

- ♥ Leave the pet's food and toys untouched.
- ♥ Let the pet sleep undisturbed.
- ♥ Don't pull the pet's tail. Instruct your child about neighbor's pets.
- ♥ Stand still during a "get acquainted" sniff from a neighbor's dog.
- ♥ Stay well away from barking or unfriendly neighborhood pets.

Safety rules about wild animals:

Most children know wild animals only through storybooks or cartoons. They may be delighted to find a stray animal in the yard or on a camping trip. Such animals can be dangerous.

- ♥ When a squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or other wild creature lets a human approach it, it may be injured or have rabies. Tell your child not to go near!
- ♥ Instruct your child to let you know the minute he or she sees such a creature. Notify the animal control authorities right away.



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Check These Out!

Ask the Public Library about these and other free resources. They'll help you to better understand your child and to grow in parenting skills.

Dinosaurs alive and well: A guide to good health. / Laurie Krasny Brown, Marc Brown. (CB)

He hit me first: when brothers and sisters fight / Louise Bates Ames with Carol Chase Haber and the Gesell Institute of Human Development. (B)

Preschool for parents : what every parent needs to know about preschool / Diane Trister Dodge, Toni S. Bickart ; contributing author, Cynthia Scherr (B)

Even more preschool power [videorecording] / A Concept Associates Video (V)

A trip to the dentist through Pinatta's view [videorecording] / Boggle-Goggle presents. (V)

Good morning exercises for kids [sound recording] / [activities by Georgiana Stewart] (CD)

(B) book, (CD) music compact disc, (V) video,
(CB) children's book you can read to your child

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Healthy Stages

3½-4 YEARS

What a relief it may have been when your two-year-old turned a more reasonable three. At three and a half your youngster may again resist your guidance. What's the cause? Your child's world is flooded with new words, ideas, playmates, and experiences. It's a lot to take in! Some get anxious. Others get rebellious. One three-and-a-half-year-old whines. Another throws a tantrum.

Be understanding, patient and calm. You may decide it's time for preschool, which offers you both some freedom and new options. Whether

at home or in an away from-home activity, your child now needs to gain a few basic skills. They'll make the transition from preschooler to school-child easier.

New rules and roles confront the three-and-a-half-year-old on a journey into the wider world. He's learning self-control. She's seeing herself not just as your child but as someone's playmate, student, patient, pal. Do all you can to help your little one step out confidently. And let him or her know your loving comfort is always just a hug and a kiss away.



Toys For Now

If you have supplied your child with plenty of art materials, such as construction paper, crayons, felt markers and blunt-tipped scissors, he or she should be happily engaged in creative play. Now, your child may enjoy exploring another creative activity. It is the world of music and rhythm. At three and a half, a child loves to pound out the beat of songs, march, and sway to music. These are welcome at playtime:

Passive music-makers.

These are "for listening":

- ♥ Wind-up music boxes.
- ♥ Cassette tapes or CD's you play for your child.
- ♥ Simple tape recorders that a child can insert music and story cassettes into.

Active music-makers.

These are "for playing":

- ♥ Sturdily built kiddie pianos with "real keys".
- ♥ Xylophones with wide metal slats and a stick to strike them.
- ♥ Drums.
- ♥ Tambourines and whistles. Or use household items! A pot and a wooden spoon make a great drum set.

PLAYTIME Games And Activities

"Where is it?"

Make a game of helping your child understand "in, on, under, between, next to, in front of, and in back of." At breakfast ask, "Where does the milk go? In the bowl." When going out, ask, "Where does your hat go? On your head!" At playtime, ask, "Where did the ball roll? Under the couch!"

Time for laughter.

One of the best assets your little one can develop is a sense of humor. Get in front of a mirror and make silly faces at each other.

Make up a silly rhyme.

Rent a funny video in the kiddie section of your video store and watch it together. At the library, ask the librarian for help picking out simple joke and riddle books suitable for reading to three and four year-olds. Laugh it up!



Nurturing Yourself

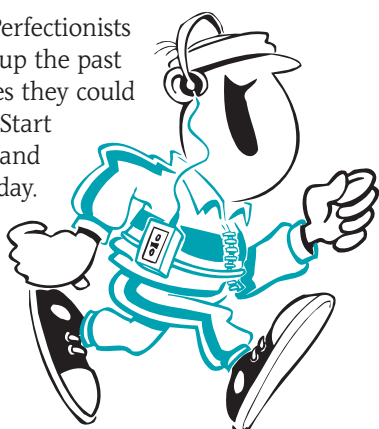
Nobody's Perfect!

Are you a perfectionist? Your parents may have told you, "Try to be perfect in everything you do." They thought they were helping you to be a good achiever. But really, being told to be perfect is damaging. It's fine to strive to be your best. But don't expect yourself, your spouse or your child to have no flaws. That's impossible! Here are some perfectionist ideals that do more harm than good:

- ♥ I must please everyone, always.
- ♥ I must be a perfect parent.
- ♥ My child must do everything right.
- ♥ My house must be spotless always.
- ♥ I must do my job with no mistakes, ever.

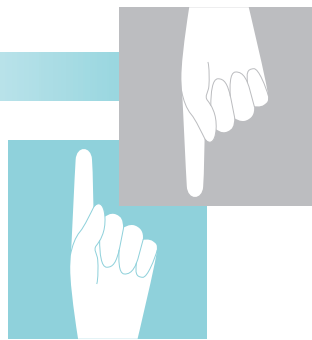
If one or more of these statements describes how you feel, it's time to get over that rigid, all-or-nothing way of thinking. Here are ways experts suggest to let up on yourself and those around you:

- ♥ Bring more balance back into your life. Try to pick up hobbies or areas of interest that you let slip while trying to be "supermom" or the bionic office worker.
- ♥ Set less demanding standards. Instead of a perfectly run, gleaming household, settle for one that's happy, comfortable and reasonably straight.
- ♥ Do things that have no goal. Read a mystery. Play in the wading pool with your child. Take a long, easy going stroll in the evening breeze.
- ♥ Forgive yourself. Perfectionists continually bring up the past and tell themselves they could have done better. Start living in the here and now. Celebrate today.



See How I Grow

A Skills Checklist To Keep



Kindergarten is the start of your child's formal schooling, and it isn't far off. While age rules vary, most children start kindergarten between four and a half and five and a half. Gently and without pressure, you may now want to begin assuring that your child develops certain knowledge or skills for starting kindergarten. Many educators agree that these are the most useful ones:

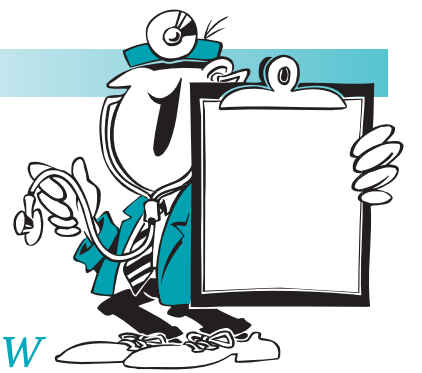
- ♥ Know his name, address and phone number
- ♥ Know her parents' full names
- ♥ Go to the bathroom without help
- ♥ Wash own hands and face
- ♥ Put on and take off jacket, sweater or coat
- ♥ Say what he wants rather than pointing or crying
- ♥ Play without constant fighting, crying or bullying
- ♥ Sit quietly and listen to a story

It's also helpful if your child can:

- ♥ Know her right hand from left
- ♥ Recognize his own printed name
- ♥ Buckle, tie or fasten her shoes
- ♥ Know names of the basic colors
- ♥ Know a circle, square, triangle
- ♥ Understand quantity: some, all, one, two, a lot, a few
- ♥ Understand what it means for a thing to be up, down, in, out, on, under

These skills are being mentioned well in advance. Take an easygoing attitude toward them and allow plenty of time helping your child master one, then another. Whatever you're helping on, make it a game and only spend a few minutes at a time on it. Give plenty of praise as your child learns to recite his name, wash her hands, or perform another skill.

Good Health Habits Start Now



At three and a half, your child may ask endless "Why?" questions. Some may involve staying clean. You may be asked: "Why must I wash my hands?" And "Why do we brush our teeth?" Give simple answers about keeping our bodies free of germs. And help your child become responsible for self-care in these ways:

- ♥ Provide a low, sturdy stepstool in the bathroom. Show your child how to wash her own hands and dry them.
- ♥ Put a dab of toothpaste on the brush and let your child take over the routine of tooth brushing.
- ♥ Set a good example. Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough, blow your nose gently, and be gentle wiping your child's nose. Have tissues handy throughout the house. These habits prepare your child for coming schooldays and a more active role in healthy self-care.

Your Child's Health

In a few months, your child will need his or her four-year checkup, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. For now, be sure your child has had the proper immunizations. And consult your child's doctor about any health or growth questions you may have.



Notes on Nurturing

I Enjoy Being A Girl . . . Boy

By now your child is aware of being a girl or a boy, and knows the sex of parents, playmates and others. Here are ways to make children equally happy at having turned out to be boys or girls:

- ♥ If there are other brothers and sisters, make sure each child knows that both sexes are equally valued.
- ♥ Most moms get plenty of private time with a preschooler. Now, dads need to make the effort to do the same. Boys need time with dad as a role model. And studies have shown that little girls who spend time with dad handle boy-girl friendships and teen dating better than those who don't.
- ♥ Avoid statements such as "Boys don't cry" and "Girls don't climb trees." Give your child the freedom to be fully human, in all its varieties of emotion and experience.

Preschool Questions To Ask

A nurturing parent has many questions to ask when inspecting a preschool. Here are some:

- ♥ "What are the goals of this preschool?"
- ♥ "How big is my child's class? How many children to each teacher?"
- ♥ "What training have the teachers and aides had?"
- ♥ "How many teachers or aides have first-aid training?"
- ♥ "What is your teacher turnover rate?"
- ♥ "What do you do when a child becomes ill at preschool?"
- ♥ "How do you discipline the children?"
- ♥ "Is the preschool NAYCE accredited?"
- ♥ "How do they feel about unannounced visits?"

In addition to asking questions you may want to check the preschool for cleanliness, stop by and visit for a while to watch how they operate and observe the atmosphere between the teachers and the children.

The answers to these questions are important. Make sure you agree with the goals of the preschool. Assure yourself that classes aren't so big that adequate individual attention is difficult.