



## Computer Use for Preschoolers—Make it Positive!



Computer use can be positive for preschoolers. Children using developmentally appropriate software have shown gains in intelligence, non-verbal skills, structural knowledge, long-term memory and complex manual dexterity. In fact, a “digital divide” is sometimes seen in children starting kindergarten who have not had **appropriate** experience with a computer.

What is considered developmentally appropriate?

**Don't start too young.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that adults discourage all “screen time”—including computer use—for children under age 2. Their time is better spent in active play and interaction with people and the world around them.

**Set time limits of 10-20 minutes** to help prevent obesity, eye problems, and other health concerns. Encourage good posture by having children use laptops or notepads at desks or tables, not while lying on the floor.

**Balance computer time with active play,** looking at books, social interaction and other worthwhile activities. Keep the computer in a public space and know what children are doing.

**Avoid telling children what to do,** but ask questions or make suggestions that help them figure out on their own how to use software.

**Provide open-ended games and software** that can support creativity, problem solving, number sense, and preliteracy skills. Extend learning by inviting children to explain to you what they're doing on the computer.

**Promote prosocial values** by choosing software, games, and websites designed for preschool-age children. (Stealing or fighting should not be made to seem “fun.”)

**Let children dictate stories** while you type their words. Help them print stories or pictures to use in collages and displays.

**Encourage children to work with peers.** They can practice taking turns, learning rules of fairness, and may even become computer “experts” with a program or game.

*Source: Retrieved from [illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/tech-computers.htm](http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/tech-computers.htm), January, 2012.*

---

Trusted parenting information, resources and activities to help your children grow, develop and learn from birth through high school at [www.MNParentsKnow.info](http://www.MNParentsKnow.info).

## Preparing to Breastfeed after Maternity Leave

Juggling breastfeeding and working is not easy. Yet, once you make a commitment to continue breastfeeding, there are a number of things you can do to make it go smoothly after you return to your job.

Choose a breastfeeding-friendly caregiver. If you can, make arrangements for child care while you're still pregnant, so your valuable time and energy can be spent on the baby. Tell your caregiver how much being able to continue breastfeeding means to you.

Get familiar with your breast pump. About two weeks before you plan to return to work, take your breast pump out of the case and learn how to put the pump together, how to get the best use out of it, and how to clean it. Begin collecting breast milk and store in the freezer before you go back to work. In the early morning you will most likely have an ample supply. You'll still have milk for your baby's first feeding even if you pump several ounces before she awakens. Get baby used to a bottle, but not too soon. Avoid obsessing about baby accepting the bottle and don't force the issue.

Talk to your supervisor about your plans for continuing to breastfeed before you return to work. Develop

Continued on page 2.

## Preparing to Breastfeed Continued from page 1

a plan that you think will work for you – when and where you will pump, where you will store milk, and other special arrangements like being able to visit your baby and nurse during your lunch hour.

Ease into the new routine. Consider returning to your job toward the end of your work week. You'll be less exhausted and you'll have several days to rest up before the workday routine begins again.

If you believe that breastfeeding is important for your baby and for yourself, doing what it takes to continue this beautiful relationship will not seem as difficult. You'll enjoy all the practical benefits of nursing your baby full-time when you are together after work and on weekends.

Source: "20 Tips for Working and Breastfeeding," <http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/breastfeeding/while-working/20-tips-working-and-breastfeeding>.

## Play: Is It Just Fun and Games?



If you have ever marveled at the look of concentration on the face of a child who tries to fit a square block into a square hole or catch a ball in mid-air, you know that playtime isn't just about fun and games. Toys help kids understand the world, learn social and emotional skills, and stimulate a developing brain.

Play in the first year of life is all about exploration. Babies use their five senses to learn about the interesting new world around them: Does an object feel hard or soft? Sticky or rough? What does it do if I drop it? These interactions help your baby learn about language, social relations, and cause-and-effect.

Toddlers are becoming aware of the function of objects, so they're more likely to stack blocks, babble into a toy phone, or drink from a "big kid" cup. The concept of pretend play starts to emerge. During this time, toddlers also begin to differentiate colors and shapes. Choose toys that are bright, colorful, and fun for little hands to hold.

Preschoolers use toys and other objects for their intended purposes, yet also will imagine a world of other possibilities for them: A blanket thrown over a table becomes a secret clubhouse. Modeling clay can be used to make pizza. Preschoolers love fantasy and will expect you to play along. Imaginary friends may "appear."

A baby staring at a mobile; a toddler stacking blocks; a preschooler painting with watercolors – all are activities that can be done independently. However, YOU are your child's perfect toy. When you sit side-by-side with your kids and paint, color, or read a story, you give them the attention they need to build their self-esteem and feel loved and secure.

Source: "Smart Toys for Every Age," by Mary L. Gavin, MD and Stevanne Auerback, PhD, [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org), October 2011.

## Mom Enough™ Podcasts

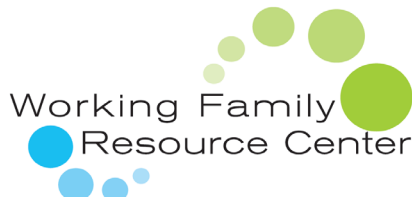


Mother-daughter co-hosts Marti and Erin Erickson invite you to explore with them the many facets of motherhood in today's world – from confronting the daily joys and struggles of helping kids grow up well, to balancing work and family. They invite you to join the conversation at [www.momenough.com](http://www.momenough.com).

**help me**  
**GROW**

If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

Early Learning Digest is a publication of:



Early Learning Digest is made possible through funding from:

