

Encouraging Your Child to Explore and Solve Problems

As the family of a four-to-five-year-old child, you may wonder:

“How can I encourage my child to explore?”

“Why does my child ask so many questions?”

Supporting your child’s exploration and problem-solving skills lays the foundation for learning in science, math, literacy, and more in early learning settings and later in school.



From four years old to kindergarten entry, children learn to:

Ask questions
and seek
information

Take the lead
and try out
actions

Explore and
solve everyday
problems

Focus on
activities and
persist on tasks

Ways Families Support Children’s Exploration and Problem-Solving Skills

Families’ everyday interactions, routines, and experiences are opportunities to build on children’s interest in exploring their environment. Children are naturally curious. They make observations and wonder about why and how things happen. They learn about their world and solve everyday problems through play. For example, children may try to put a puzzle together, follow simple steps when playing a game, or figure out how to make a tower more stable by placing wider blocks at the bottom.

Each child has a different way of exploring, learning through their senses, and making meaning of the world. Follow your child’s lead and discover the many things they are curious about. Ask your child questions to learn more about their interests and what they wonder about. Think about ways to help your child solve a problem one step at a time. You might also talk with teachers about strategies, materials, equipment, or other supports your child might need to fully explore and be a problem-solver!

As you think about your child, ask yourself:

- › What are some things my child likes to do or shows interest in?
- › How do I build on my child’s curiosity and explore their questions during everyday play and interactions?
- › How might I encourage my child to take the lead in solving problems that come up in play and tasks throughout their day?



ACTIVITY IDEAS for Families

On a walk, wonder with your child about what is happening around you. Help your child notice the colors of flowers, the changes in the color of leaves, the textures of rocks or bird feathers, the shapes of clouds, or the intensity of the wind. Ask questions about your child's interests and actions: "Remember that hole in the ground we saw? What kind of animal might live in there?" or "You found so many interesting things on our walk. What will you build with the lava rocks and sticks we collected?"

When preparing a meal, invite your child to help. For example, ask your child to help you gather what you need or to measure and mix the ingredients. Share your experiences: "My father used some of these ingredients to make salsa with me when I was little. Let's try making our own version." Invite your child to share what they notice while mixing ingredients. Talk about how you would problem-solve any missing ingredients.

Outdoors or at the park, observe what your child likes to do. Think about how your child is exploring the materials and play equipment and ways you could encourage your child to try new things safely. Give your child choices or suggestions: "All the swings are being used. Do you want to ask someone for a turn or do another activity?" or "What would you like to play? Do you want to kick a soccer ball?" Think about the ways your child is using materials: "I noticed you are placing wood chips on the bridge and counting them. Tell me about what you are making."

During bedtime, experiment with light, shadows, and shapes. Invite your child to think about ways to make shadows. You might use a lamp, flashlight, or phone light pointed at household objects in a dim room. Explore with your child and invite their observations: "I wonder what will happen if we move the light?" or "Let's create a story about this coyote shadow. What should happen first? The coyote jumps? Okay, now I'll add a part of the story where the coyote meets a raven."

Learn More About Children's Exploration and Problem-Solving Skills

Explore more about your child's development using the [Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards](#). Below is a summary of key knowledge and skills from the standards that relate to children's exploration and problem-solving.

Approaches to Learning

Children are curious and driven and engage in play with others.

Science

Children use their senses and tools to explore, make observations, and make predictions.

Mathematics

Children explore and solve problems through gathering data, sorting, counting, estimating, measuring, and making comparisons.



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