

Just in Time

Months 59-60



Parenting



Your child is beginning new relationships.

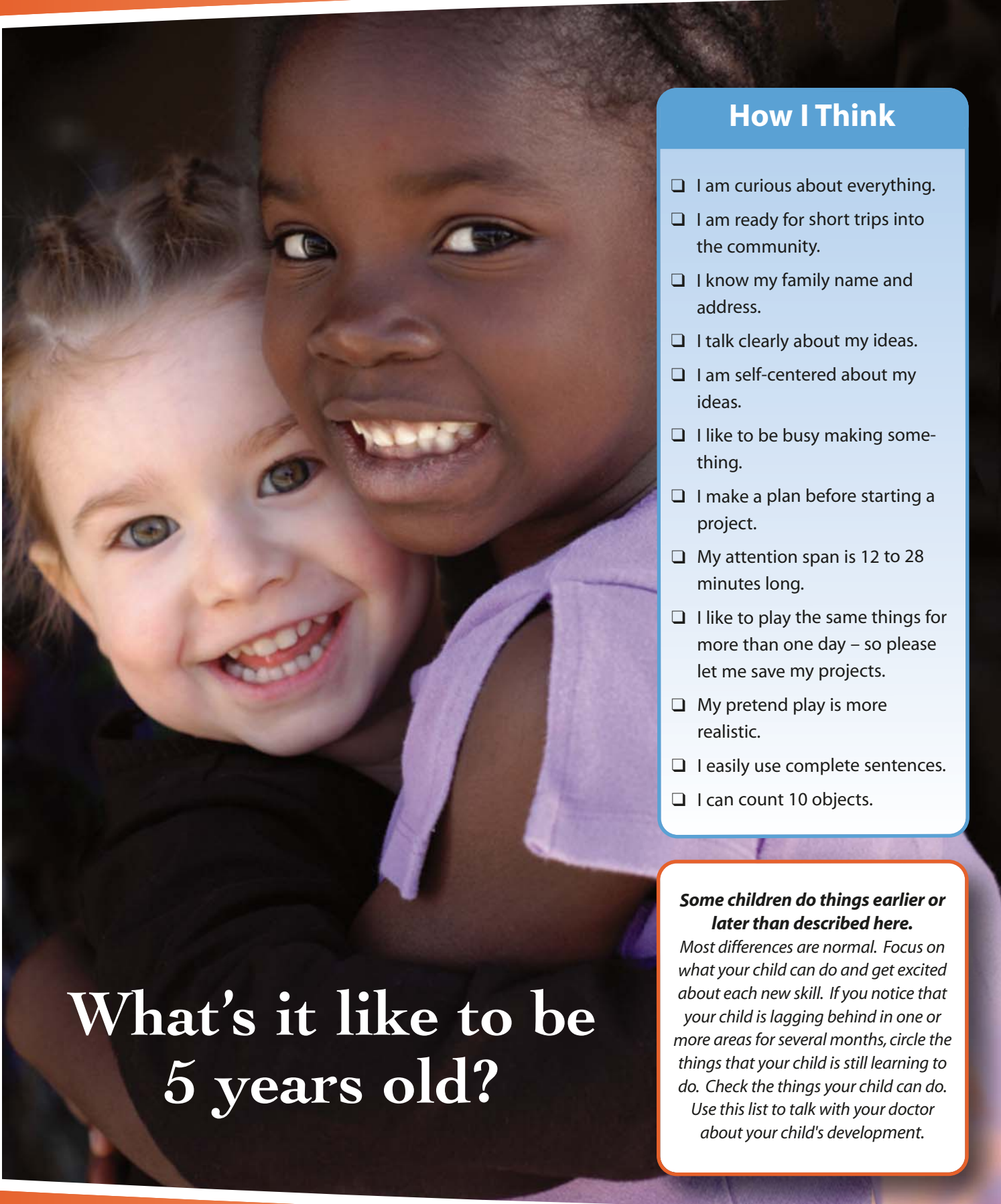
Your 5 year old is entering a period of self-discovery as he begins to play with more children.

- His peer group will become important as he spends more time with them and less time with the family.
- Peers give children the chance to measure their abilities in relation to other children. However your home and family are still very important to your child. They provide feelings of safety and a place where children know what is expected.
- The family is where children feel valued and can let their true selves and deepest feelings show.

Quarreling among brothers and sisters happens in every family.

- The arguments may get tiresome for adults, but they help children learn to get along with others.
- Within families, children learn much from each other — like how to argue, defend themselves, stand up for their own rights and make peace.





What's it like to be 5 years old?

How I Think

- I am curious about everything.
- I am ready for short trips into the community.
- I know my family name and address.
- I talk clearly about my ideas.
- I am self-centered about my ideas.
- I like to be busy making something.
- I make a plan before starting a project.
- My attention span is 12 to 28 minutes long.
- I like to play the same things for more than one day – so please let me save my projects.
- My pretend play is more realistic.
- I easily use complete sentences.
- I can count 10 objects.

Some children do things earlier or later than described here.

Most differences are normal. Focus on what your child can do and get excited about each new skill. If you notice that your child is lagging behind in one or more areas for several months, circle the things that your child is still learning to do. Check the things your child can do. Use this list to talk with your doctor about your child's development.

How I Move

- I can draw a face with eyes and a mouth.
- I am skilled and accurate with simple tools, like safety scissors.
- I can sit still for brief periods.
- I enjoy jumping, running and skipping.
- I sometimes roughhouse and fight.

How I Get Along

- I may fall in love with my kindergarten teacher, but still feel close to my family.
- I choose friends of either sex as playmates, but playmates may change from day today.
- I like to be first, win, or be the best.
- I may bribe friends with promises, like "If you let me go first, I'll give you gum."
- I say things that may not be true because I am afraid — like, "No one likes me. They never let me play."
- I may get wild, silly and giggly.

Are you raising a socially healthy child who knows how to resolve arguments peacefully?

Socially healthy children are able to get along with others, and when disagreements come up, they can solve problems in a peaceful way. Parents are the most powerful people in a young child's life. Begin early and give your children the best start possible in their social relationships with love, attention, and a positive example.



These are ways parents can help children learn to be socially healthy:

- Show children positive ways to resolve conflict by talking through problems calmly. Use arguments or disagreement as a chance to show peaceful ways of solving problems.
- Step in to help children talk through differences with others. Help them think of ways to solve problems when they are not getting along with others.
- Practice "parental coaching," Vary your level of supervision depending on a child's age and needs, and intervene when social situations become too challenging for a young child to manage.
- Maintain a friendly family environment and allow children to learn social skills without stress or high levels of conflict.
- Plan family fun time — so everyone can play together.
- Be sensitive to times of transition or crisis that can upset children — such as divorce, separation, financial stress, death.

Children and parents feel anxious about starting kindergarten.



When your child is about to start to kindergarten, you may worry: "Is she ready?" "Have I done enough?"

Actually, you may have taught your child more than you realize.

- You have helped her learn basic survival skills.
- You have taught her to feed herself, cross a street and get along with others.
- By teaching her language, you have given her the foundation for all later learning.

You have also taught attitudes toward school and education. Those attitudes are far more important than numbers and letters. Attitudes determine how

children feel about school and how hard they try. Making sure children form positive attitudes is one of a parent's most important tasks.

Most young children are eager to go to school. They talk and talk and talk about it. They want to learn how to read, and they are anxious to please and do well. In fact, most children feel so excited they begin to get "butterflies" inside. They may be:

- Worried about their parents, "Will Daddy leave me there and never come back?"
- Nervous about being with strangers, "Who will play with me?"
- Scared about going to a new place, "How will I find kindergarten?" "What if I get lost?"
- Afraid they will not fit in, "But I cannot read yet."

Parents, too, feel excited. They have looked forward to this time as well. They are glad their child is growing up and becoming independent. Yet, parents may be worried. They may be:

- Upset about leaving their child. "Will Tammy miss me? Will she cry?"
- Nervous about their child's health and safety, "Will she be worn out from riding the bus so long?"
- Unsure of their new responsibilities, "What will Billy's school expect of me?"

- Anxious for their child to succeed, "Did I do enough to prepare her?"

Even if a child has already been in school settings — such as playgroups or child care — the start of formal schooling is a new experience for both child and parents. In their minds, this is the day the child begins "real" school. Like any big change, it brings apprehension as well as joy.

Just before starting kindergarten, visit the school.

Learning about the school and learning what the teacher expects of parents will ease any worries or fears you may have. It also prepares your child for school. Preparing your child for kindergarten gives you and your child confidence that everything will be OK. Call your child's school to ask when you can visit. Some schools have a special time for new students to see the classroom.

Take your child to visit the school.

- Draw a map of the way to get to school, and show it to your child.
- Walk or drive the bus route to school.
- Show your child what door to go in and walk down the halls.
- Look around the classroom and point out different things.
- Watch what children are doing.

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Starting kindergarten

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- Find the bathroom.
- Look for the nurse's office.
- Play on the playground.
- Draw a picture of the school.
- Take a photo of your child at school.
- Talk about what you saw.

Introduce your child to people at school.

- Introduce your child to the teacher and principal.
- If you know the teacher, tell your child. You might know where the teacher lives or if the teacher has children.
- Explain who other people are — custodians, secretaries and assistant teachers.
- Invite a few of your child's future classmates home to play and get acquainted.

Talk about what your child will do in school.

- Find out what your child expects.
- Clear up your child's misunderstandings — such as "but I can't read yet."
- Describe activities your child will do in school. Discuss why they are important.
- Explain some rules your child will have to follow in school and why they are necessary.

Help your child feel he will like school and learning.

- Find out why your child thinks school is important.
- Explain why you think school is important.
- Share some of your good experiences in school.
- Explain how the teacher will help your child learn.
- Start a school scrapbook. Keep a record of important events and what your child does in each grade.

Your child may be a choosy — not a picky — eater.

When children refuse to eat a certain food or always ask for the same foods, they may become labeled as a picky eater. What seems picky to you may be your child's first steps in learning to choose or make decisions about food choices. She may be showing her independence by being a choosy eater.

Picky or choosy eating is temporary. If you don't make it a big deal, it will usually end soon. My pyramid for preschoolers suggests ways to handle a picky eater:

www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/HealthyHabits/PickyEaters/

- Let your child help pick out foods — such as fruits and vegetables — at the store. Children are more likely to eat foods they pick.
- Let your child help prepare foods. Children will eat almost everything they help make.
- Make meals relaxed and enjoyable so your child learns healthy attitudes about eating together.
- Offer choices such as "Which would you like for dinner: broccoli or green beans?"
- Offer the same foods for the whole family. Don't be a "short-order cook" by making a different meal for your preschooler.
- Offer a variety of foods and let your child choose how much of these foods to eat.



What do you know about your child's brain?

Question – Do my interactions actually have much impact on what is happening in my child's brain?

Answer – The brain is growing new connections constantly. Experiences with new kinds of activities or stimulation can cause growth in the brain within only a few hours after the experiences begin. Activities such as exercise, listening to music or throwing a ball cause different areas of the brain to grow new connections, develop stronger connections or become more active. Frequent new learning experiences and challenges are like “nutrients” to the brain that enhance growth.

Question – What are the most important ingredients in creating a great learning environment for children?

Answer –

- Children need new information and experiences that are challenging and allow them to solve problems. Challenges that are too hard or too easy lead to problems.
- Children need a variety of ways to learn — with different activities and different ways of doing things.
- Children need feedback about how they are learning that is specific and given soon after an experience.

Question – How much of the “wiring” in a child's brain is genetics versus how much comes from the environment?

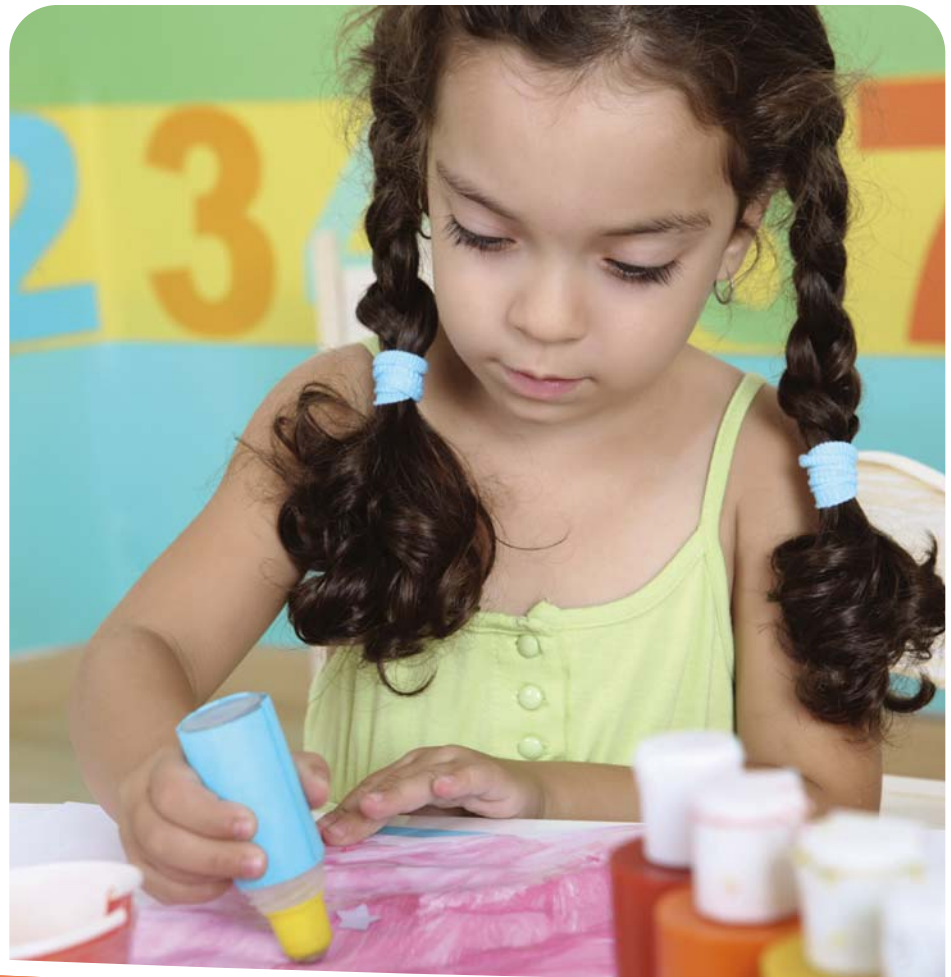
Answer – The connections between your child's brain cells are developing constantly. About 30 to 60 percent of our brain's wiring is inherited. About 40 - 70 percent develops as a result of life experiences. A parent's care and guidance are much more likely to influence certain aspects of the brain than what a child inherited.

Question – What happens to children who have poor care and few learning experiences during the early years of life?

Answer – The early years of a child's development are very important, but the brain is capable of overcoming many negative effects.

- During the first 12 to 14 years of life, a child's brain can bounce back from a lack of care or learning experiences and develop capacities that were not nurtured in the early years.

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Your child's brain

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- For example, children who have little chance to develop language skills early on still can make up much ground if they get a lot of help with language and reading between the ages of 4 and 10.

Question – Does what a child eats affect brain development?

Answer – Yes! Specific foods that stimulate brain function and growth are leafy green vegetables, fish (such as salmon), nuts, lean meats, fresh fruits and dairy foods. Drinking lots of water helps children learn, have energy, and pay attention.

Question – What are the best activities to enhance children's overall brain development?

Answer –

- Music engages and stimulates all aspects of the brain. Provide experiences with different kinds of music and especially rhythm, rhyme, and repetition in music and songs.
- Art helps children understand their feelings and develop thinking skills. Give children opportunities to draw, paint, and create using different types of art.
- Physical activity and movement stimulate brain growth. Regular exercise and participating in varied physical activities are critical for healthy brain development in children.

How can you manage your family and work responsibilities?

Currently, 60 to 70 percent of mothers with children under the age of six work part time or full time. This has led to parents sharing childcare.

Couples must decide:

- Who picks up a child from the childcare center?
- Who arranges to see the doctor?
- Who can create a more flexible schedule?

Mothers and fathers who struggle with balancing work demands and raising children often deal with stress and fatigue. This makes parenting more



difficult and can become discouraging. Here are some things that parents can do to balance their work and family roles:

- Spend time discussing and planning for the family's future. Discuss who will work at what times and why. Explore options related to work and begin planning for future changes.
- Focus on working as a team — rather than each person simply pursuing his or her own goals. Parents have individual goals, desires and needs — but family goals are important too. Identify family goals and work toward them together.
- Raising young children requires flexibility and teamwork. It means moving from “you or me” to “us.” Focus on how all family members can create the best environment for raising your child.
- Explore options at your workplace that can help to ease burdens with raising a child. Is childcare available within a reasonable distance? Are there options for flextime or work sharing arrangements?
- Talk to other parents who also work and raise a young child. Discuss the strategies that they use to manage their work and family concerns. Build a network of support that can assist you in times of need.

Is your child ready for kindergarten?

Teachers want children entering kindergarten be able to:

- Follow simple directions
- Use the toilet by themselves
- Use pencils and crayons
- Explain what they need
- Focus on a task for at least several minutes or complete it
- Work at tasks independently.



Want to learn more?

For more parenting info and updated links, visit www.extension.org/parenting.

If you have questions, contact your local Extension office.

This newsletter gives equal space to both sexes. If he or she is used, we are talking about all children.

Credits: This newsletter is adapted from Extension Just In Time Parenting newsletters in California, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Wisconsin.