

Things to Remember

Mary Elizabeth Hoffman, M.A.

Florida Department of Health



Things to Remember When Teaching Young Children

Below are tips and ideas to remember when teaching young children in the classroom or at home.

Children's Age, Ability, and Behavior

1. The teacher should keep in mind that age does not necessarily reflect the child's learning ability.
2. Therefore, the teacher should use his/her better judgment to decide whether it is appropriate to divide children into groups by their age or according to their level of development. Some four year olds may be more comfortable working with the three year olds whereas those more developed may be more suited for working with the five year olds.
 - If the activities with the 3 year olds are too easy their attention might wander because they are not being challenged enough to learn.
 - When this is the case, these children should work with the older age group.
 - If the more advanced lessons are too challenging for some of the older children, their attention can also stray.
 - Invite these children to work with the younger group for that particular lesson.
3. Make the transition from one group to the next easy and unpronounced.
 - Tell the children they are switching groups because the teacher thought they would enjoy the other activities better.
 - Parents have more concern for such transitions than do the children, so it is important for the teacher to put them at ease.
4. All adults who take care of children should note two important facts about behavior.
 - Boys have a tendency to get more attention than the girls in the classroom, especially when the teacher is female.
 - Teachers should pay attention to how they relate to groups of children to ensure they treat boys and girls similarly as they interact with them.
 - It is generally acknowledged that boys learn through competitive activities, while girls learn better through cooperative activities.

Things to Remember

- Working with young children provides opportunities to introduce both types of activities so they can learn from both each style.
- On average, learning activities are competitively oriented, girls might not perform as well or with as much confidence as boys.
- It is a good challenge for teachers and parents to monitor their biases and eliminate them as much as possible.
- Children who make more noise in the classroom often get more attention from teachers.
- Teachers should make sure that quieter children who sit or play alone also get the important attention that all children deserve.



You are the **ROLE MODEL**

1. Ask yourself, “What are my eating habits?” and “What is it that I do for physical activity?” As adults, we need to make sure that we are practicing the same habits we are asking the children around us to practice.
2. Children copy the way their parents and teachers act, think, and talk. Children are much less likely to smoke, for example, if their parents do not smoke. Keep in mind adults can easily:
 - Forget how their actions affect children.
 - Misjudge the amount of information children retain at young ages.
3. As parents and teachers, we need to remember to “practice what we preach” by being good examples for children.

Children Love to **REPEAT** Things

Repeating new words and ideas is one of the best ways children from birth to 6 years old remember and learn. Repetition:

- Helps them learn how to pronounce words correctly. This is why children like to read the same book over and over again even if it is boring for adults!
- Should be incorporated throughout a lesson plan for young children.

Emphasize **POSITIVE WAYS** to Talk and Act

1. Parents and teachers should tell children what they want them to do rather than what they don’t want them to do. For example, when a child is talking too loudly, the teacher can say, “Please talk quietly” rather than, “Do not talk so loudly.”
 - From “Do not talk so loudly,” children mainly hear the word, “loudly.”

Things to Remember

- From “Please talk quietly,” children mainly hear the word, “quietly.”
 - Very young children rarely pay attention to words like, “not” or “but.”
2. Teaching children positive ways to eat and move is also a better approach than focusing on the negative.
FOR EXAMPLE: We do not want them to think it is wrong to eat a piece of cake or a cookie once in a while.

Listen, See, and Do Things

1. Increase opportunities for children to learn by having them listen while the teacher shows pictures of the subject being taught.
 - This is the same activity as children playing “show and tell” at school.
 - Children remember more of what they are taught when we show and tell them what they are learning.EXAMPLES: If teaching children about fruit, say each new word and spell it aloud. Write the word on the board for the children to see. Show photos or drawings of different fruit while describing each one and its taste.
2. Expand the “show and tell” idea by including the children in activities related to the new subject being taught.
FOR EXAMPLE: Talk about an apple, show the children what a real apple looks like, and cut it into slices for the children to taste. Ask the children to draw or color a picture of an apple.



Teach Children New Things That Go Along With What They Already Know

Easier and possibly faster ways to have children learn is by introducing new ideas that go along with those they already know.

FOR EXAMPLE: “Fruit,” a new subject for young children, can be taught by talking about “food,” a word and idea they already know. Ask children about their favorite foods and tell them that a specific group of food is called “fruit.” Once children are familiar with the idea of fruit, specific kinds of fruit, such as apples or oranges, can be introduced.

Gradually Introduce New Words and Concepts

1. When teaching children new words and concepts, choose words within their ability to understand. Words that are too difficult to understand can frustrate children and make them feel disappointed in themselves.
FOR EXAMPLE: “Avocado” may be a new and difficult word for children to understand.

Things to Remember

2. New words need to be slowly introduced to children through repetition, listening, seeing, and doing. Words taught too quickly makes learning more difficult, which can lead to frustration and disappointment.

Self-Esteem and Confidence

1. An important way to help children build self-esteem is by encouraging them to be proud of themselves and what they do. Young children build personal confidence when parents and teachers encourage them to congratulate themselves by clapping their hands or hugging themselves.
2. By repeating activities a few times each week, children are more likely to learn and remember long term. Through their successes, they develop self-esteem.



Reminder for All Adults

1. For many young children, the concepts included in a lesson plan are being explained the first time.
2. When taught similar principles, younger children might have a harder time grasping some concepts than the older children.
3. Adults who teach younger children should give themselves credit for taking educational challenges. You are laying the foundation for concepts so children will be more likely to build on them as they grow.
4. The dialogue written in a lesson plan should help the teachers communicate concepts and principles to the children. However, teachers have the flexibility to change the dialogue as needed.

Resources

South Dakota Public Broadcasting. (1999). How Children Learn. Retrieved December 22, 2003 from: <http://www.sdpb.org>

Kaufman N, Castrucci B, Mowery P. (2002 June). Predictors of change on the smoking uptake continuum among adolescents. Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine (156).

Lamanna M, Riedmann A. (2003). Marriages and Families: Making Choices in a Diverse Society (8th Ed) Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning Inc.