

## COPING WITH COVID-19

### Teaching Preschoolers At Home

Margaret Machara, Ph.D., CFLE, Professor, Department of Human Sciences  
Contact: 615-963-5628, [mmachara@tnstate.edu](mailto:mmachara@tnstate.edu)

Beatrice Harris, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Extension Specialist  
Rita Fleming, M.S., Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist  
Kane Reeves, Ed.D., Extension Agent & County Director



*“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” – Fred Rogers*

With their increased mobility and emerging personalities, preschoolers can sometimes be more challenging for parents than they were as infants; particularly parents who are trying to work from home. However, this new independence is a great time for instilling the love of learning with play based activities.

#### **WHAT PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ARE LEARNING**

These years cover the barely toddling 2 year old to the running, jumping, and climbing 4 year old. Vocabulary jumps from an average of 50 words to over a thousand that they can put together into complex sentences. Preschoolers are also learning how to interact with others and read other people’s emotions. They are learning letters, numbers, shapes, colors, body parts, organization, and self-care. Their world has expanded beyond the family into their neighborhood and other places they go. Preschoolers ask lots of questions as they try to figure out how things work and they don’t hesitate to share their opinions!



#### **LEARNING ON THEIR OWN**

While preschoolers love your attention, they are able to complete many tasks on their own. It is good to give them the opportunity to work independently to build their self-confidence and self-esteem. This also helps them learn boundaries, as they gain practice sharing your attention.

- Set up a “work” area for them near you. Include all the materials they need to complete their own tasks.
- Coloring, drawing, and writing are great ways to increase fine motor skills.





- Puzzles increase logical reasoning skills and coordination.
- Stacking or building toys improve imagination and motor skills.
- Collect old magazine for your preschooler to cut

out letters or pictures that they like.

- Trade out a stack of picture books that your preschooler can look at when you are busy.
- Play child friendly music or audio stories in the background while you both are busy.
- Give them an old keyboard or laptop to type on beside you.

## LEARNING WITH YOU

Children learn a lot from interaction with adults. They copy what you do and that adds to what they know. Let your child lead, following what they do, and then add onto it with something slightly more advanced for them to try. Don't be afraid to be silly. These are years that build your relationship and create great memories!

- Pick a word and take turns saying as many rhyming words as you can think of.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Preschool children are starting to understand the perspectives of other people. Give them very specific guidance on what to do when you need to focus on something else. It also helps to show them when you'll be able to give them your attention again. Set a timer or show your child on a clock when "work" time is over and "play" time will begin. Be patient but consistent about when they need to occupy themselves. An occasional smile and friendly acknowledgement of what they're doing can keep them connected while you each focus on your own activity. Don't forget to be kind and patient with yourself. Parents get frustrated and make mistakes. Children are forgiving and feel the love in the relationship. Ask for help from other when you need it and take time to recharge yourself.

- Put on music and have a dance party.
- Build a fort out of blankets and imagine a world.
- Read a book together.
- Have a tickle war or pillow fight.
- Plan games for a water party.
- Plant a garden.
- Play board games and let your preschooler count out the spaces moved.
- Research a country and cook a meal of traditional food together.



- Go on a hike and look up the names of the bugs and flowers you see.
- Visit an museum and then create your own.
- Have a picnic and look for shapes in the clouds.

## RESOURCES

Check out these resources for other ideas:

- [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
- [www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org)
- [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)
- [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

For General Health Information: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471

TN Addiction and Recovery Hotline: 1-800-889-9789

TSU-20-0093-(B)-16e-13520 - Tennessee State University does not discriminate against students, employees, or applicants for admission or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, age, status as a protected veteran, genetic information, or any other legally protected class with respect to all employment, programs and activities sponsored by Tennessee State University. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Natasha Dowell, Office of Equity and Inclusion, [ndowell1@tnstate.edu](mailto:ndowell1@tnstate.edu), 3500 John Merritt Blvd., General Services Building, Second Floor, Nashville, TN 37209, 615-963-7435. The Tennessee State University policy on nondiscrimination can be found at [www.tnstate.edu/nondiscrimination](http://www.tnstate.edu/nondiscrimination)