

Early Learning Parents' Pages



July 2017



Dread dining out with your preschooler?
These tips can make it easier.

Explore summer learning, **celebrate the 4th**
and get ready to **save** during Florida's
Back-to-School sales tax holiday.

Dining Out with Young Children

A favorite relative is in town and invites your family to dinner at the new, upscale restaurant.

You have a 3-year-old and a 6-month-old and cannot get a sitter. Do you want to sit in a restaurant with a baby and toddler for an hour or more and keep them engaged and quiet while socializing with other adults? This can be daunting. **Prevent, prepare** and **practice** is the solution to dining out with preschool children that Roslyn Ann Duffy suggests in her book, *The Top Ten Preschool Parenting Problems*.



Prevent: First, you may want to propose another restaurant since it will be difficult to manage and entertain two young children in this type of setting. A cafeteria or family diner will be faster and have more foods toddlers may enjoy. You can suggest take-out food from an upscale restaurant and dine at home where it is easier to manage the children.

Prepare: If you are going to a restaurant, talk with your child (ages 2 ½ and up) about the way you expect her to behave at the restaurant. Practice this behavior with your child



at home before going out. Role play how to sit at the table, use a fork and spoon, clean your face with a napkin and how to order. Talk with your child and role play behavior you expect at a restaurant and behavior that is unacceptable. Explain the need for safe and respectful behavior when you are away from home. "You cannot get out of your seat and run around because you may cause someone to trip and fall." Pretend you are at restaurant when you eat meals at home and take turns with your child being different adults and being the child. She can be the server at one meal, the mom at the next and the child at another meal. Take a bag of mealtime toys (small, quiet toys, paper and crayons, children's books) and some snacks such as dry cereal or raisins to help your child wait for the food.

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Flags and Fireworks

It is time for our country's birthday and your child will be excited to celebrate Independence Day.

There are many activities for families with young children such as parades, firework displays, cook-outs and dinners with family and friends. Including your child in preparing for celebrations helps her feel she has an important role in making the event special.



Let her help make [decorations for the Fourth of July](#) cookout or picnic. PBS *Crafts for Kids* has tips for making decorations with your child such as flags, wreaths and cards. Have a red, white and blue lunch and let your child help you make a Red, White and Blueberry Salad and a [Fourth of July Berry Sweetza Pizza](#).

Invite friends and children to have a neighborhood children's parade. Children can decorate riding toys, bicycles and tricycles with flags and streamers. Decorate wagons or garden carts and let your dog ride with your child in the parade. Parents will need to walk along with children to make sure everyone is safe.

Teach your child about the men and women who are serving our country. [Make a care package](#) of things you gather as a family or spend time making cards. Even the smallest efforts can show appreciation to our troops.

If you go to a public fireworks display, be aware the loud noises may frighten a young child. Bring earplugs or noise-canceling headphones your child can wear during the display. To learn more about fireworks safety visit <http://bit.ly/1TC07KG>. Have a safe and happy Fourth of July!



Explore summer learning

As a parent, you want your child to continue learning all year long. During summer months, many people think children should take a "vacation from learning," but summer provides many opportunities for families to expand learning and make it fun at the same time. You can support your child's learning as you have fun exploring nature, libraries, museums, parks, beaches and lakes. The Office of Early Learning (OEL) website has a [Summer Activities](#) page with 36 different ways for families to support their children's learning while having fun. The activities encourage children to use their five senses to explore the world around them and learn various math, science, literacy and social concepts.

Get the [Vroom app](#) and receive a tip each day this summer with an activity you can do with your child to help brain development. A Vroom tip for 4-year-olds suggests taking your child outside to look for rocks, sticks and leaves she can use to make Nature Faces. She can use two rocks for eyes, a leaf for a nose, a stick for a mouth. Find other natural items to make hair or teeth. This encourages your child to be creative and think in symbols by using objects such as rocks and leaves to stand for other things—a type of thinking that is essential for reading and math.

Vroom Texting

[Vroom is a free app for families](#) with children birth to 5. It sends a daily message with a tip specifically for your child's age that helps to build your child's brain. Using Vroom tips, you can make any routine or time of day a brain-building opportunity. [Vroom is now offering these brain-building tips for your child via recurring texts](#). You can start receiving the weekly texts by texting **READY** to **48528**. Sign up via text and have a learning tip ready for your child at any time of day.



Florida's Department of Education invites families to join the [2017 Summer Literacy Adventure](#). If you have children who attend or will be attending a public school in Florida, you can help your child fill out the [Summer Literacy Pledge](#) on the department's website. After the summer break, the department will recognize the 10 schools with the highest percentage of participation. The school whose students read the most books will receive a surprise visit from First Lady Ann Scott.

Visit [OEL's family resources page](#) for more ideas on supporting your child's learning and healthy development at home. [OEL's Pinterest](#) boards have numerous ideas for families and child care providers. Check out the Summer Events and July and August Upcoming Events boards for fun summer activities. The Family Resources board has 151 resources and ideas for families.



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Plan now to save on back-to-school

It may be the first week of July, but it is not too soon to be thinking about getting ready for the start of school. School starting dates in Florida are staggered and vary by school district. Most 4- and 5-year-olds will be starting VPK or kindergarten in mid-August. Getting ready for school can be expensive for families. With this in mind, the Florida Legislature established the [2017 Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday](#) during the 2017 legislative session. The legislation creates a three-day "back-to-school" sales tax holiday from August 4-6, 2017, for clothing and footwear costing \$60 or less, school supplies costing less than \$15, and for a personal computer or personal computer-related accessories, including tablets, costing \$750 or less.



Look for a new social media campaign for your child's first day of VPK!



If you have a child who will be starting VPK this year, you will want to make the day special. Early learning

coalitions and VPK providers across the state will be working together to help make the day memorable for your child. Look for this hashtag – **#1stDayVPK** along with Facebook frames and Pinterest ideas and activities.

Florida VPK

Track your child's development on your phone

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers an app for families—[Milestone Tracker Mobile App](#)—to help them learn more about their children's growth and development. From this app, you can learn about developmental milestones your child will achieve and see videos and photos of the "milestones in action."

From birth to age 5, your child will reach milestones in how she plays, learns, speaks, acts and moves. This app allows you to keep track of the milestones your child has achieved using an interactive illustrated checklist. It will keep track of your child's doctor's appointments, provide you tips and activities to support your child's development, and send reminders of recommended developmental screenings for your child. It lets you know when to act early and share developmental concerns with your child's doctor.



MILESTONE TRACKER



...because milestones matter.

The Milestone Tracker Mobile App is currently available for iPhones and will be available for Android users soon. [Download the Milestone Tracker App](#) from iTunes. Send an email to ActEarly@cdc.gov if you would like to be notified when the Android version becomes available.



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Dining out with children

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Practice: After your home instruction, take your child to different types of restaurants to practice the skills. Start with family-friendly fast-food restaurants. Cafeterias are fast, have easy-to-find food children enjoy, and great for practicing restaurant behavior. *Practice what you preach.* Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior and make sure you follow through. Think about what you say and make sure you choose consequences appropriate for your child's age and easy for you to control. "If you don't stay in your seat during dinner, you can't play with your toys" may not be the best consequence for an active 3-year-old. If your child will not stay in her seat at the restaurant, take her out to sit in the car until she is ready to return to the table and sit while everyone eats. Do not get angry or scold her, just state the behavior expectations for restaurants and the consequences. If she cannot follow the expectations or cries and disturbs others, ask that both your meals be boxed for takeout and take her back to wait in the car until the rest of the family has finished their meals. It is most important to do what you tell your child you will do. Consistency and follow-through are the basis of good parenting skills. Begin as early as possible with your child to **prepare**, **prevent** and **practice** to make your dining experience as pleasant as possible.

Time to immunize...

Is your child starting a new child care program or transitioning to Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) or kindergarten? If so, you will need to make sure all of his immunizations are current. Check with your child's pediatrician or check your copy of his health records if you are unsure.



[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) has a page for parents to help you learn how to protect your child from 16 potentially harmful diseases. There are resources to help [track your child's immunizations](#), [learn how to calm or support your child before and during the doctor's visit](#) and find the [best way to hold your infant, toddler or young child](#) while he is getting a shot.

You can download a 60-page booklet—[Parent's Guide to Childhood Immunizations](#)—that has an overview of the different vaccines children need and tips and resources for parents who would like to learn more about immunizations for children.

To help you understand the importance of childhood immunizations, the CDC has a video for parents—[Get the Picture: Childhood Immunizations](#)—to answer many questions parents have about immunizations.

Coming in August...

- First Day of VPK
- Back to school
- Florida's Sales Tax Holiday
- And much more



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