

Pointers from the Preschool Pros

Secret strategies preschool teachers use that
Katy parents can learn from

Written by Holly Leger

Primrose teacher Alicia Hughes encourages her student's independence.



Instead of tube time, set up a learning station at your kitchen table similar to Primrose's

Navigating the world of preschools can be a challenging thing. After all, it's the first learning environment children will experience apart from their home. They are growing in knowledge as well as socialization skills. *Katy Magazine* reached out to the local experts, Katy preschool teachers and administrators, to uncover their preschool tips that parents can utilize at home.

Don't Do for Your Child What He Can Do for Himself

Many preschool teachers agree that one of their main goals is to help children learn to be independent. Betty

Holland, the director of operations at Foundations Academy, says in order to accomplish that goal, their students perform small tasks on their own, like throwing away their trash, putting on their shoes, and washing their hands.

Holland says parents can also help their children with these skills at home by asking them to do similar self-help activities. One example is letting children pick their own clothes. "Even if it is stripes and flowers," she laughs, recalling some of her daughter's favorite clothing choices in preschool. "It may be terrible, but they will get a sense of how to dress as they get older. Let them be independent."

2 Teach Social Skills

Developing independence often goes hand-in-hand with developing social skills. Katy's Early Childhood Enrichment Center owner, Nicole Istre, says that while it is important to help children recognize certain social cues, it can be equally as important to step back and let them work it out themselves. For instance, if your preschooler is arguing with another child, Istre suggests letting them figure it out on their own rather than intervening. "Let children make decisions for themselves," she says. "They end up being stronger socially, and even academically."

To help prepare children for these situations, Starla Fitch, the marketing director of several Primrose Schools locations, notes that it is important for parents to constantly act as good social role models. "When you are interacting with other children, make sure to point out the positive behavior that you see in their friends," Fitch says. "Show them how to share, show compassion, and be generous with their friends."

3 Say Goodbye with Confidence

Dropping off a child at preschool for the first time can be a stressful situation for all parties involved. To avoid the tears that can come with initial drop-off anxieties, The Learning Experience's curriculum coordinator Ronna Williams advises parents to make a visit to the school with their child before the school year begins. "One thing a parent can do to prepare their child is setting up a play date at the school," Williams says. "That way, the child can see what will be happening and get some level of comfort."

When the first day arrives, Holland says parents should never linger in the classroom when it's time to say goodbye. "The longer you linger, the more you're sending a message that says, 'I'm apprehensive to leave you, therefore, you should be apprehensive to stay,'" Holland explains.

4 Monitor the Media

After a long day of work, it's easy for parents to come home and sit their child down in front of the TV while they begin the routine of making dinner, bathing kids, and bedtime. Foundations Academy preschool teacher Melissa Newsome advises parents to give their children basic activities that will develop their fine motor skills, like cutting coupons out of the newspaper, working puzzles, stringing beads, building blocks, or coloring.

Building Rainbows director Veronica Gonzales says placing your child on a media diet is important. But she also understands that educational TV viewing is an alternative to other forms of entertainment. She suggests offering activities for your child to do while they watch, like a sorting activity, where the child sorts specific types of laundry into separate piles. "It's not perfect, but it meets that need a little bit," Gonzales says.



Katy preschooler
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Ask your preschooler specific questions about their day to help with their memory recall



The Learning Experience advises parents to visit the school before the year begins to help calm first day jitters

5 Follow Through and Mean What You Say

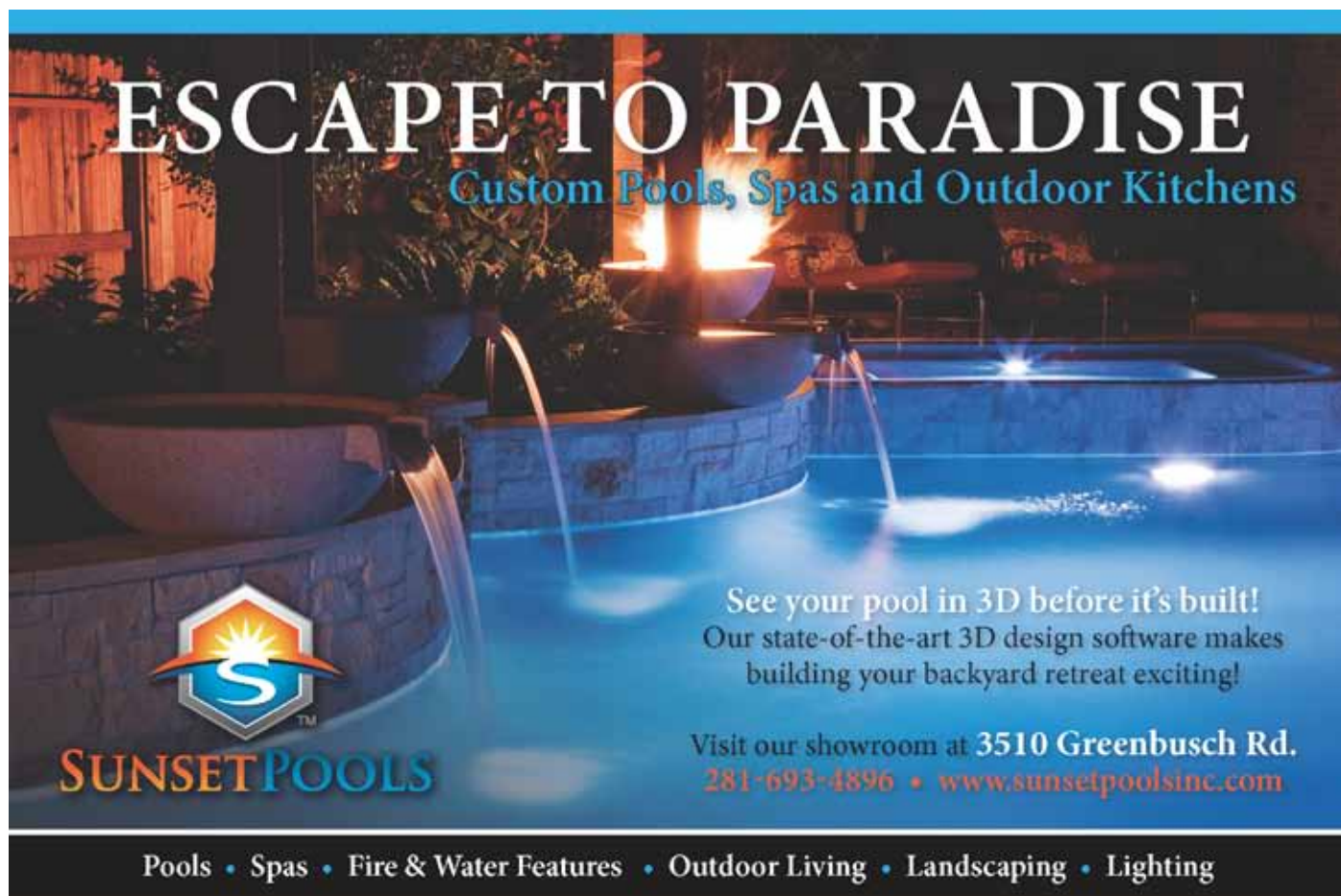
It's inevitable - children will misbehave. When kids start preschool, their parents suddenly aren't around to correct them. To make this disciplinary transition easier, Holland suggests parents communicate with teachers to understand the disciplinary expectations in the classroom and how those rules can be used at home. "If someone is throwing blocks here, you're going to time-out," Holland says. "If they're throwing blocks at home, you need to do the same thing. You need to be consistent with it."

Gonzales encourages parents to work together with their child's teacher but not to let the lines between them blur too much. "At home, mommy needs to be mommy, and the teacher needs to be able to be a teacher at school," she says. Consistency is important, but the bond between parent and child is unique and special. **KM**

HOLLY LEGER is a freelance writer who is grateful to all the wonderful teachers in her life, from preschool through college.

More Tips from Preschool Pros

- Ask preschoolers specific questions about their day to help them recall what they learned
- Play outdoors as much as possible to develop motor skills
- Use a sticker chart to reward good behavior each day
- Keep regular routines to help children stay adjusted with the school schedule
- When preschoolers ask for help, tell them, "You try first," before lending a hand
- Read books at home to build language skills
- When playing with preschoolers, let them choose what activity to do
- Visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children at naeyc.org/DAP to understand different development stages



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