

Kindergarten November Part 1

Children need a firm foundation for a life of learning

"How firm a foundation"—these words of an old, old hymn tell the purpose of all this information you are getting.

Your kindergarten child needs a "firm foundation" while he is learning the beginning parts of the more complex skills of efficient writing and reading.

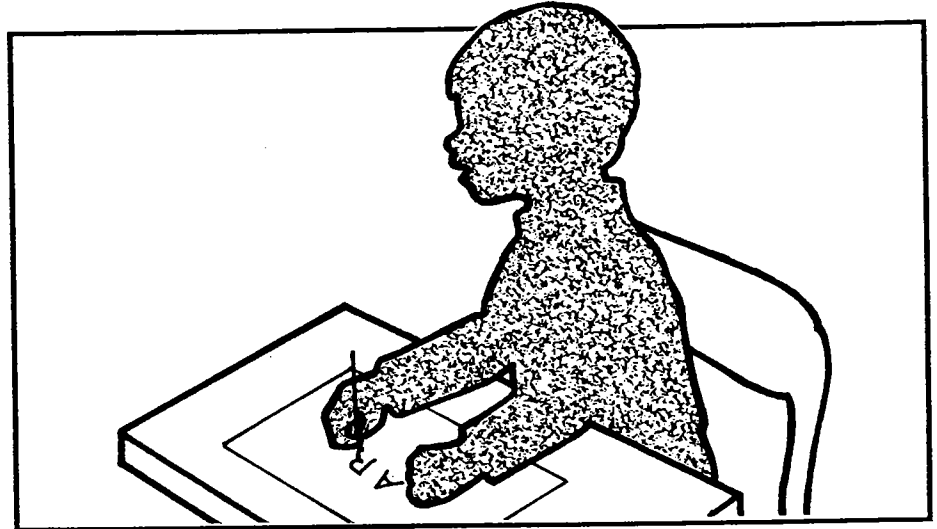
A mature pencil grip will pay dividends later on and a mature head posture while reading and writing assures consistency of input from his eyes.

If your child moves his head from side-to-side, he is using one eye, then the other.

If your child keeps his head turned sharply to one side, then he is using only one eye—the one on the side of his head that is up.

If your child lays his head on his arm either at intervals, or continuously, he is blocking out vision in one eye and is using only one eye.

If your child has had a visual examination, yet he has any of these habits, he needs further evaluation. Describe what you have observed to the doctor. Ask for this information:



• Does my child use both eyes together when he looks at books at reading distance?

• Does he move each eye evenly with the other when he looks up and away and also when he looks back to the book?

If the answer to either or both of these questions is "no," then find out what to do to correct the problem—and do it now!

Capitalize on your kindergarten child's attributes to develop good habits that he will begin to use automatically in preparation for the school years ahead. Do it now before first grade.

When your child began—after turning five—to show

some ability to inhibit an impulse, he began to show determination. (That's logical. A bit of determination must be present to inhibit!)

At the same time, he began to be a bit dogmatic. "There's only one way to do a thing...my way!" he'll insist.

A mild reprimand will usually be enough to remind your child that he likes to conform. So when he's working with pencil and paper, or reading, insist on a mature pencil grip and a good head posture, using mild reprimands as needed. Your dogmatic kindergarten child will adapt before long—and make it "his" way!

*"A man has no more character than he can command in a time of crisis."
—Ralph Sockman*

Kindergarten November Part 2

Kindergarteners are dreamers

Kindergarteners are not day-dreamers, they're night-time dreamers.

For some reason, there is a significant increase in dreaming at this age.

Perhaps it's due to the language explosion she is experiencing. Your kindergarten child also has a remarkable memory of day-to-day events in the family and at school.

Also, she questions constantly and builds up an impressive storehouse of information. These emerging attributes would logically build up a rich memory-bank to draw on for very interesting dreams.

Unfortunately kindergarten children have more unpleasant, even frightening, dreams than pleasant ones. It may be that she has many pleasant ones, but the pleasant ones are not worth mentioning.

She reports strange happenings with wild animals and odd-looking, "bad" people. If she wakes, crying, she can tell you what happened, and after a little loving can go back to sleep.

She remembers enough of these dreams that a picture in the book that is

being read to her—or a word—will jog her memory about the main events in a particular dream even after several days.

There are times when you think she is having a nightmare when she doesn't recall any information.

She wakes abruptly, screaming. She sits up in bed, shows intense anxiety, a frightened expression, and sometimes rapid breathing and a quick pulse. She may show some repetitive movements with her hands such as picking at the blanket or her clothes.

Comforting her in the usual way has no effect until the agitation subsides. But she won't remember one fragment of "the nightmare."

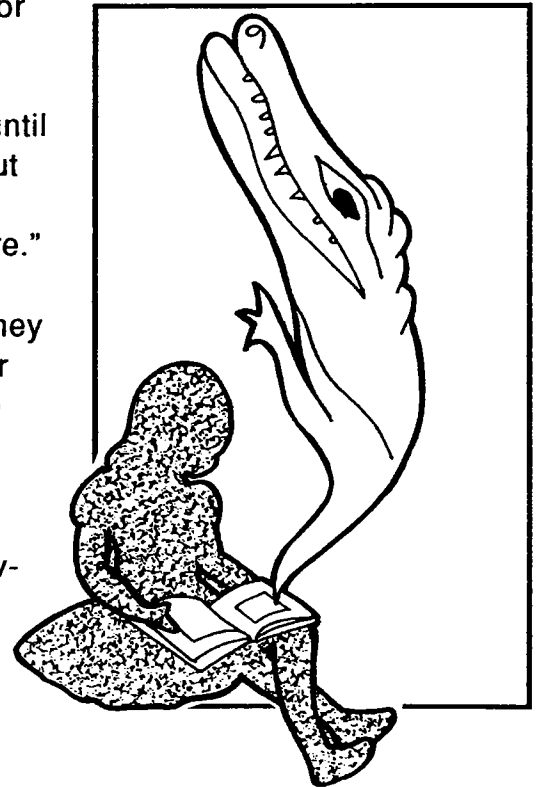
Such nightmarish outbursts are not dreams. They are called sleep-terrors or night-terrors and they are highly related to stress.

They may happen on consecutive nights or the interval may be within several days or even weeks. Between 4 and 12 is the age when night terrors

usually begin, and if they begin in childhood, they disappear in adolescence.

The best treatment is to find the stress and remove it if possible.

You will need to discover what, when, who and why stress is occurring. To calm your fears, it is estimated that only one to four percent of children have repeated occurrences of night terrors. A much greater proportion of children experience isolated episodes.



*"We think too small, like the frog at the bottom of the well.
He thinks the sky is only as big as the top of the well.
If he surfaced, he would have an entirely different view."*

—Mao Tse-Tung

Kindergarten November Part 3

Reports from school and what they mean

Although school is important to your kindergarten child, he does not talk much about it. He accepts it and conforms.

He may report that another child hit him and the teacher "made him do something." But he is so matter-of-fact and gives so few details that it is more often than not difficult to get the facts.

You may wonder about his classroom behavior. You have heard about radical changes in behavior occurring at school: children who are pleasant and cooperative at home become quarrelsome and rowdy at school. The opposite also happens.

This kind of change usually means your child is not really ready and comfortable in a classroom group experience. He's edgy and a bit nervous over this new situation in which he finds himself. Therefore, the stress causes him to react out of character.

If your school has not provided for a parent/teacher conference by this time, set one up. Ask the teacher:

- What your child likes best.
- What he likes least.
- What is his general attitude? Is it happy and open? Or solemn and edgy?

- In what areas can you help?

Some traits are typical of kindergarteners. They like to:

- Listen at story time.
- Recall facts from the story.
- Speak with adequate sentence length and good articulation.

They don't like to:

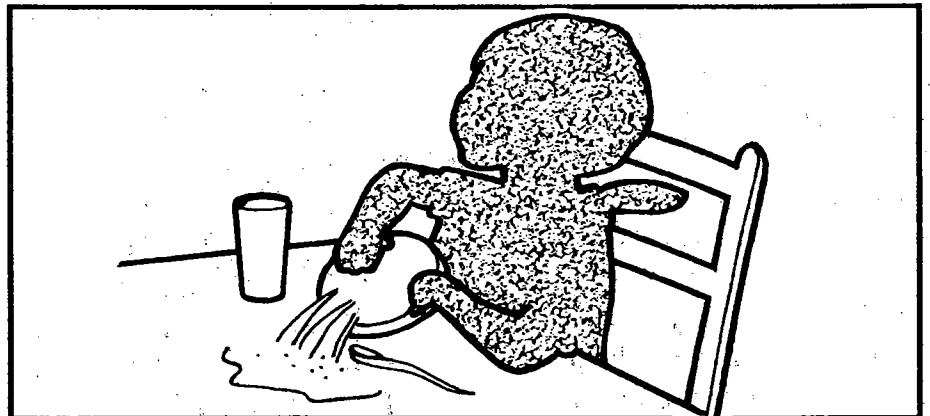
- Write their names.
- Copy letters and numbers.
- Finish work.

They listen well and talk well but don't like the writing tasks. They are diligent, but just don't finish even though they "stay at it."

This is because their "internal" computers have some systems that are working better than others. And using one system alone (listening then talking) is more efficient than combining two systems, as we must do when we write.

The kindergartner's individual systems are mature enough. It's the combining, the integration that is lagging.

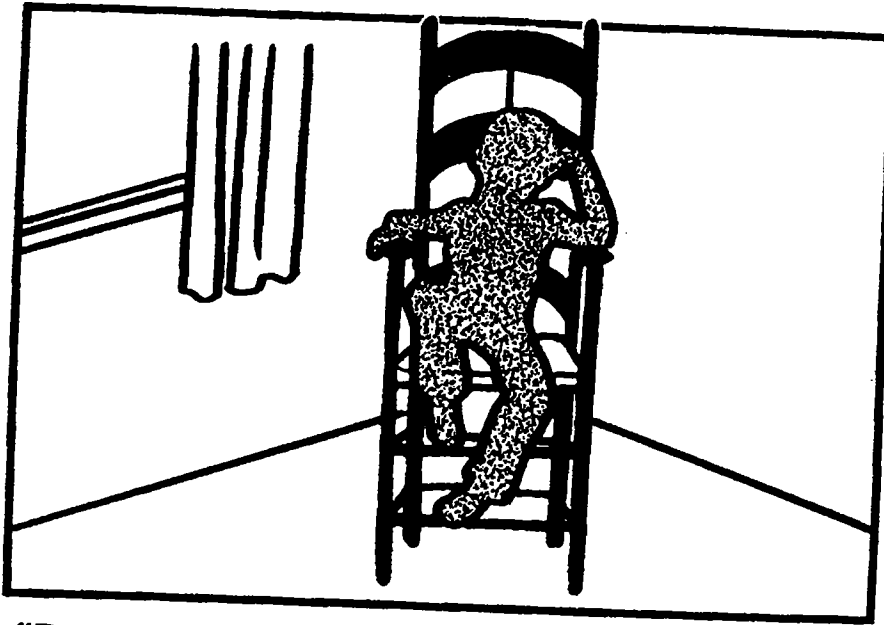
Kindergartners need more time and relevant experience to "tidy up" this important phase of their personal computer's operation.



"The search for truth is really a lot of good fun."

—Vernon Howard

Grade 1 Week 10



"Real work" stress

The first grader is now becoming involved in "real work"—numbers and reading in his workbooks. At the same time he is in a Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde stage where he is alternately sweet/sour, quiet/noisy, calm/explosive. He will be critical of his achievements at school. At home he will react wildly before he finally settles down, seeking forgiveness. If parents make a demand, the child might reply, "NO, I won't!" or "How are you going to make me?" If giving him face-saving delays does not work, then use another form of discipline that he responds to: isolation, play in his room, or sitting in the "thinking chair" in a quiet spot away from older siblings. Remember, "real work" at school is new to your youngster and can be unsettling.

Playing

Your child is in almost constant motion, whether standing or sitting. Family trips to the playground or swimming pool, as well as bike riding, ball throwing, and catching will help get him ready for the playground activities that are so important to his social and emotional well-being.

Learning to read

A first grader really wants to learn to read. He likes to be read to and will listen to almost anything. The best way to prepare the young child for reading is to hold him on your lap and read aloud to him, allowing him to trace under the line with his finger. The printed page, the physical comfort and the security of the story—all combine in the child's mind to identify books as a pleasant experience.

"Education is a kind of continuing dialogue, and a dialogue assumes, in the nature of the case, different points of view."

—Robert Hutchins—

No criticism, please!

The new student will now have his first pre-reading workbooks. For him, this is the beginning of "real reading." He will bring home his completed books with great pride. Try to avoid criticism of errors and neatness. Praise is the magic formula to bring out the best in the new reader.



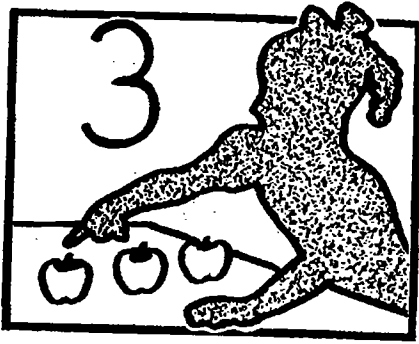


Table manners

At mealtimes your child is spilly, wiggly, and a napkin-dropper. She seems driven to be active just because she is this age. She must touch, handle, and explore everything. As a result, she drops her utensils, turns over her milk, feels her mashed potatoes with her fingers. Forcing her to sit still, if that is even possible, often results in non-stop talking (another form of movement) with her mouth full. Sending her away from the table is no solution, either. She would really rather eat alone, happily dawdling. Taking away her food causes a belligerent reaction. She will outgrow these behaviors in time and adopt the model you set with your table manners. How are your table manners?



Learning about numbers

At school, the first grader is involved with numbers of things and with the numerals that represent them. She may even be combining groups of objects and writing the numeral for "how-many-ness." First graders like games that develop their number prowess: dominos, lotto variation, cards. Table games that let her spin the arrow, shout the number, then move her marker, counting the steps loudly are much loved. Such games help develop the automatic "knowing" that is so helpful in understanding more abstract concepts.

Your child would love a game before supper or bed. No older siblings, please, unless they can treat the younger child without teasing or jeering!

For fathers, as well as mothers

In our society, we are already well aware of the important role mothers have in raising their children. In recent years, however, we have become increasingly more aware of the equally important role which fathers can have in the lives of their children. With so many mothers today working outside the home, fathers are taking a more active part in raising their children. Nowadays, whenever we think of something as "Mom's job" (in traditional terms), we can ask if it could now be described just as accurately as "Dad's job."

The first grade year, with all its new challenges, is an important time for building not just stronger mother-son and mother-daughter relationships, but also stronger father-son and father-daughter relationships. It would be well, therefore, that both parents be involved, as much as possible, in the everyday care of a child, from getting dressed in the morning to reading a bedtime story at night.

There is no doubt that fathers and mothers generally have different influences on their children. Young children are the greatest beneficiaries when both parents become actively involved in child rearing. With such help from both Dad and Mom, a first grader will more easily adjust in making the transition to the larger world outside the home.

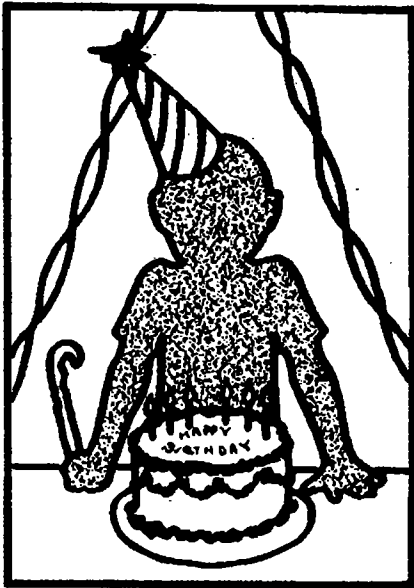
*"A child should always say what's true
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table
At least as far as he is able."
—Robert Louis Stevenson—*

Grade 1 Week 12

Birthday parties

A birthday party is a big social event for a first grader, whether it be his own or someone else's. At school, the classroom structure helps him stay calm. In the home, though, the excitement of a party is often too much. He may withdraw from the scene completely and observe from a corner. Or he may become wildly excited and babble ("I'm going to eat the couch!") or run around completely out of control.

An ideal size for a birthday party for this age is six friends. One familiar party game and ice cream and birthday cake are really all that's needed. First graders are rather rigid this way and think it fitting and proper to do the traditional things.

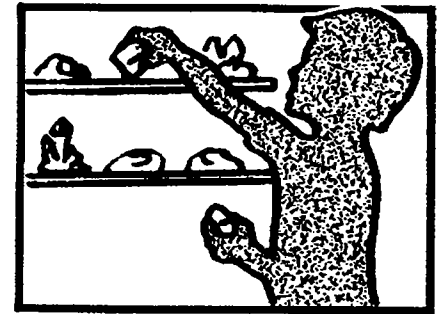


Developing coordination

First graders are usually clumsy. Their coordination is poor. Yet being able to run, kick, hit, and catch is very important for acceptance at school. Active games with simple rules (like kickball) develop attention, coordination, and body control.

Learning to write

Learning to write is important—but hard. Writing requires sitting still. It means copying from a board. The child gets tired. His hand hurts. To learn to write, he must have practice. A chalkboard placed flat on the floor or on the kitchen table can offset his negative feelings about writing (you can make a chalkboard by putting two coats of chalkboard paint on a 4x6 piece of masonite). Writing on the board teaches relaxation of hand and fingers, as well as mastery of the formation of letters, words, and numbers.



Getting and saving

A first grader is eager for more and more possessions. He is also a great "saver," although what he treasures may seem like messy clutter. You can capitalize on his desire to "get and save," which will help develop his mental powers! Don't push it, but make possible the beginning of "collections" of whatever takes his fancy: rocks, bugs, buttons, matchbox cars. A collection of similar objects helps him see small differences in like objects. Later, this skill will help him see the difference between similar letters—"b" and "d" or "p" and "q." Sorting socks or knives, forks, and spoons is learning—and fun too!

*"A child miseducated
is a child lost."
—John F. Kennedy—*

