

Giving My Time To My Kids



A Guide - Parent to Child Bonding
For Parents with children in the
early and middle childhood stages

Patricia .N. Phiri

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Foreword

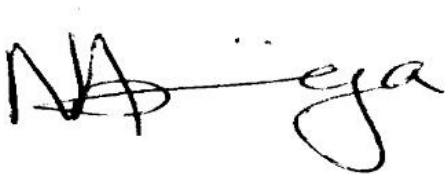
Children long to bond with their parents. Signs of these could be restlessness, nagging or even poor school grades. Parents, on the other hand, frequently misunderstand this and struggle to deal with it. Eventually children may grow up embracing many bad and harmful vices.

This book gives parents a foundation to communicate with their young children through children's activities. It provides a guide for parents to interact and find best ways to discover who their children are: their emotions and intellectual strengths and weaknesses. The children's activities include literacy activities.

Africa as a whole is faced with the challenge of reducing illiteracy levels. At home, the involvement of Parents in children's education would help reduce this. Education provides empowerment. It is a powerful tool that can help economically and socially marginalised families to lift themselves out of poverty.

With this original work, Giving My Time To my Kids, the readers are provided with clear and usable information concerning Parenting through children's activities. The author Patricia Nyembezi Phiri, contributes to noteworthy efforts to publish books and materials for an intelligent public interested in raising their children in a way that encourages parental to child bonding. The book will also help improve parent child communication.

Miriam Muvuma Mwiinga

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Mwiinga', with a stylized, flowing script.

Executive Director

Young Women's Christian Association Zambia

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband Steve Sichone and children, Taizya and Christopher Sichone for helping me understand early childhood development in a very unique way.

Preface

From dawn till dusk how may a child spend his or her day? Lets imagine the child's name is Chess. After breakfast Chess watches favourite children's programmes on television for two hours and then plays with toys with siblings. At 12:30 hours lunch is served and just after having it, Chess runs off to the neighbour's house to play video games with friends. Chess gets back home in time for a bath and a small snack after 17 hours then, sits before the television until supper time. Chess begins to doze off after 20 hours and so goes to bed around that time. Therefore in essence, time spent for personal development is very minimal,. The child would feel detached from parents because of not spending time with them.

This now brings us to the question of how a parent can interact with the child; firstly, to keep the child busy, secondly to grow the child's mind, and thirdly, to build an everlasting relationship with the child. That question is what brought me to over ten years of close interaction with my daughter and son, during which the consistent use and benefits of mental activities such as art, nature study and use of story books when consistently studied. Interaction through these activities brought about family bonding and the building of innovative minds.

Readers and active users of this book may eventually observe that a child who goes through literacy lessons , grows with good listening and conversational skills, carries out instructions well and develops good speech quickly. Secondly, a child who was exposed to nature by studying and learning names of various creatures and plants around the home appreciates nature conservation. Finally, among many other benefits, a child who enjoyed art such as painting or piano music learns to pay particular attention to detail. The activities illustrated in this book were used and followed with a daughter and son over ten years. By reading of various children's educational materials both academic and supplementary and teaching my children in ways that brought the learning materials to life, this book was thus born, initially to be used as my own personal Parenting Guide..

Resulting effects were consistent regardless of children's' differences in sex, personal interests from one activity to another, as well as differences of skill development . In addition, children began the journey of self-discovery early, and therefore, would attend to their most loved activities in times when supervision was absent, rather than engaging in passive activities or showing destructive behaviour to seek attention. Giving My Time To My Kids is therefore original work which I have created and used in my own parenting duties and now sharing with the public interested in Parent to child bonding.

Chapter 1.0

Developing Good Speech In A Child

A large, stylized blue capital letter 'T' that serves as a decorative element for the start of the first paragraph.

here are times when a child requires every minute of attention from the parent without his or her siblings taking part in the activity, in order for him to learn language well. Learning that develops the mind to produce clear expression of thought and emotion are especially demanding as the child learns to listen, understand and speak with the correct choice of words.

Eloquent speech could be taught by reading good stories to the child with a wide vocabulary. Writing down favourite parts, reading out the words and sentences carefully and drawing pictures depicting the main idea, would help the child learn to establish the newly learnt words and application. All this has been illustrated, in this section using literary activities. However, these times would prove to be moments that give a litmus test to the parent's patience skills, but will give room to improve.

Chapter 1.1 - Listen And Understand

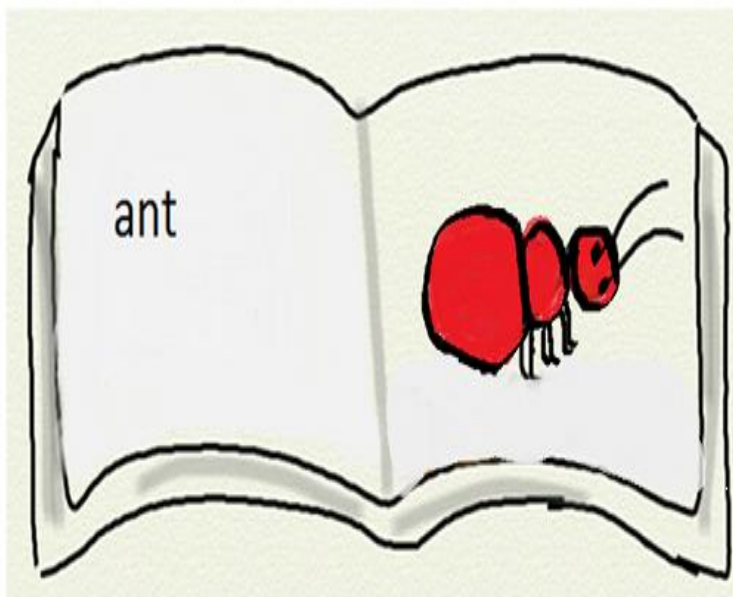


Developing one's skill in listening, means consciously choosing to hear what is being said. This would entail picking the key words, getting the details, drawing and understanding the whole picture from the speaker's point of view. To get full understanding, one needs to observe the emotions portrayed whilst speaking; one's sincerity or lack of genuineness; and the effort with which one is using to get the message across (is it casual or serious).

To build this very important skill in children, an adult could tell or read stories to the child. By the parent and child getting fully involved during story times, they can learn new words and grammar, thereby improving their choice of words and phrases for best expression of thoughts.

Learning New Words

As first books, literature with pictures naming items, that are normally found in or around our homes, are ideal to teach as new words. The child's early understanding may be shown after several reading sessions with him or her. The child would start speaking after the reader with each recognised creature. Slowly the parent could add books with pictures of things the child has not yet been exposed to, to widen the child's knowledge.

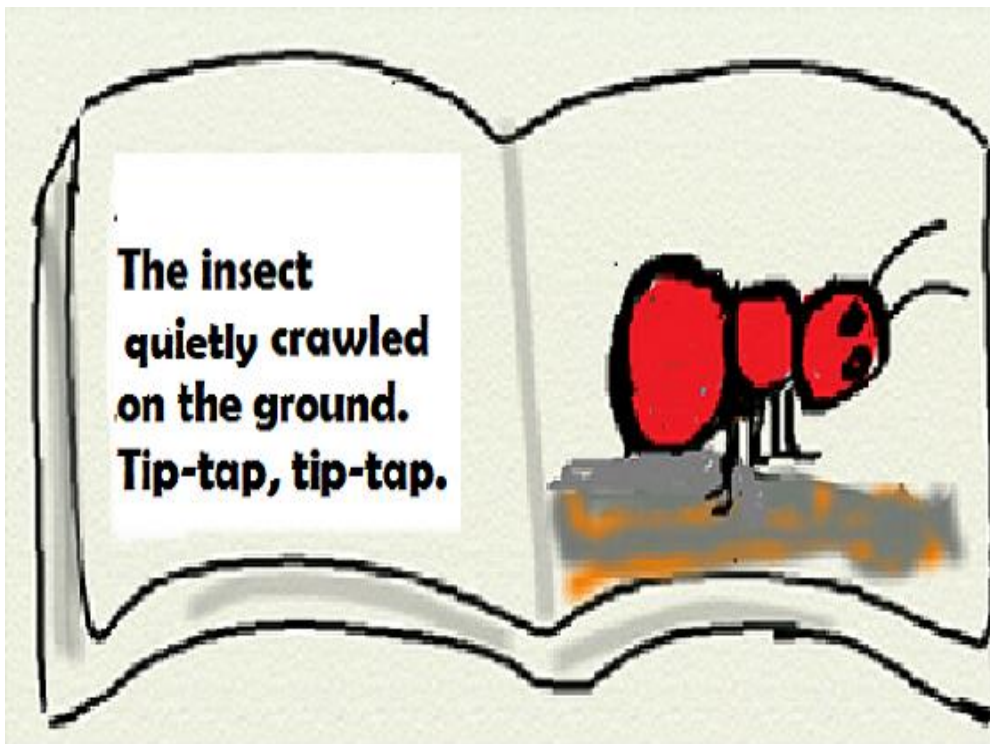


First books

Learning To Construct Sentences

As the parent reads the story, the grammar forming the sentences provide an elaborate meaning and illustrates the correct usage of words thereby, helping the child learn to construct sentences.

As one begins to read stories to the child, the voice of each character as well as the changing volume from soft to loud (to make each event distinct), would give the story some motion. Reading the words slowly and linking the pictures to the text as you read, would help the child keep up with your reading. The child would begin to understand even more as he or she learns to find interest in looking at the pictures of the story on his own, and try to connect the sequence of events. As the child grows, developing a clear speech, the child may attempt to read the story in his or her own words using the pictures as a guide . This would kindle the novice interest in reading books.



Learning to
construct
sentences

As one reads the sentence ... 'The insect is crawling on the ground', the word, '*insect*' , tells us what we are talking about. The action word '*crawling*' gives the details of what is happening, and the place, here named as '*ground*' completes the information by telling us where it happened. Thus, as the child builds his speech and vocabulary, the child would communicate with sentences that are complete, with details of what actually happened.

Cause And Effect

One's actions (cause) will always make another person react in a certain way (effect). Knowing this, helps us all to think before we act. Narratives are very useful in developing a profound picture of actions and reactions and most importantly the resulting effects. In addition, one learns to understand the emotions that tag along with them; emotions such as courage, fear, joy or sadness and thereby learning what is right and wrong behaviour.

Listening To Narratives

Narratives are stories that are told in chronological order; with a beginning, middle and ending. Their beginnings introduces time, place and characters in the story. Conversations and action that the characters take help build suspense and conflict during the middle of the story. The ending concludes with a conflict resolution. Therefore narratives are very useful in developing a profound picture of actions and reactions and the emotions that tag along with them.

To achieve this, the reader must create suspense in the paragraphs with dialogue by using vocal qualities such as pitch (speak with high or low voice), rate (fast or slow speech), volume and expression (relaxed or excited tone). Show moods and feelings using facial expressions. Use body movements and gestures to emphasise what you are saying and hold the child's attention by creating eye contact. As the adult increases the number and kinds of stories read, the child would have developed a wide repertoire of scenarios with actions and their consequent reactions and use them to learn the best ways to communicate effectively, as the child socialises with people of different personalities.

Act It Out

For the story to be fully appreciated, one would need to act it out. Use the exact words in the story and try to show emotion along with the actions. You could also use your toys as puppets to act out the story. That would help the child understand actions and reactions from a spectators view.

Memories

You could store up **memories** by taking videos of your reading time, and discussions of what the story personally meant to each of you. Exchanging rolls of reader and listener will help you the parent learn to listen to your child attentively thereby drastically improving your skills of listening as well.

Title: Mother's Day

Beginning

One bright Saturday morning, James left home with great excitement quickly swishing the gate behind him in a hasty run. His sister, Helen, watched him go into the meadows, with curiosity. '

She decided to sneak quietly behind him drawing closer and closer until she got to the spot where James had stopped to pick wild flowers.



Middle

James loved it when his mum smiled and her eyes lit with amazement and appreciation each time she received his flowers. Suddenly, James heard a sharp scream burst out right behind him.

" Look out! Ants!. "

At that, James sprung up in panic, jumping from one foot to another panting and sweating in despair, before finally furiously looking back at his giggling sister. With his face turned red and his eyes burning with rage, he hastily bent down to grab his colourful flowers . He paused, as his sister Helen slowly raised her hands with a gapping mouth.



End

The beautiful wild flower collection was trampled down to a heap of sticks and shredded petals.

''Oh James, I'm so sorry'' ,Helen sobbed.

Her jealous curiosity had turned into a painful regrettable action.

She now understood how important it was to be

calm and learn to

ask instead of

setting off

unnecessary

spiteful

pranks.



Now James

had to pick flowers all over again , in the prickly grasses, but even more, he knew he had to forgive Helen, so that he could have the joy he needed to warmly surprise his mum with a bouquet of wild flowers; and that he did.

Chapter 1.2 - Write It Down

Writing is useful for both children and adults for the process of self communication as well as transfer of information to others. Children begin by learning to recognise and write individual letters (or numbers) with their own unique pencil hold and print. Then later joining them into words and sentences. With time, they begin to develop and express their

thoughts and understanding and write these down. However, this could take a couple of years for children and so this is a process that requires a parent to exercise a lot of patience.



Colouring inside the letters

Therefore when one reads a story to a child, writing one's favourite line from the story, could be a very useful tool for remembering the phrases or lines that one would like to do to the vocabulary.

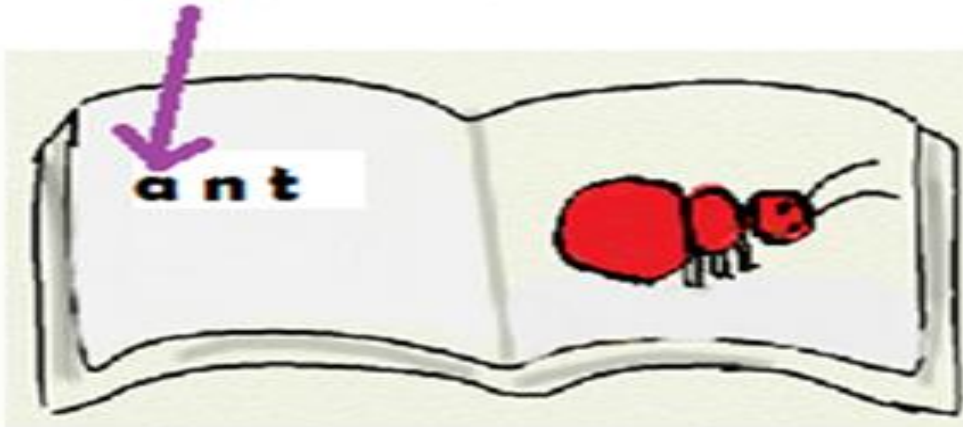
Introducing Letters

One could best start by introducing alphabet letters using an alphabet song. By beginning with small letters, you could point to the corresponding letters as you sing, so

that the child may learn the song and letters simultaneously.

The parent could then move onto writing, by drawing the outlines of the letters and thereafter, allow the child to colour their inner parts. You could guide the child to hold the crayon as he or she learns to colour. Applauding good effort will help the child find joy in the activity.

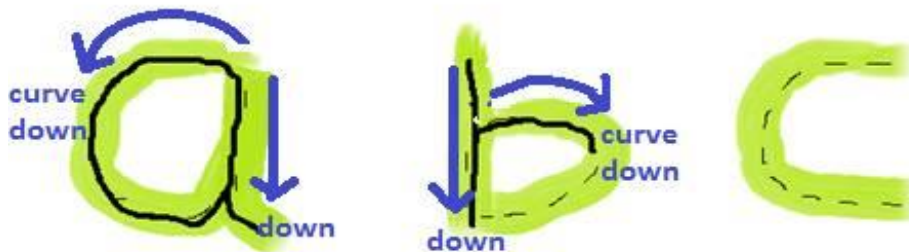
what letter is this?



Identifying
letters

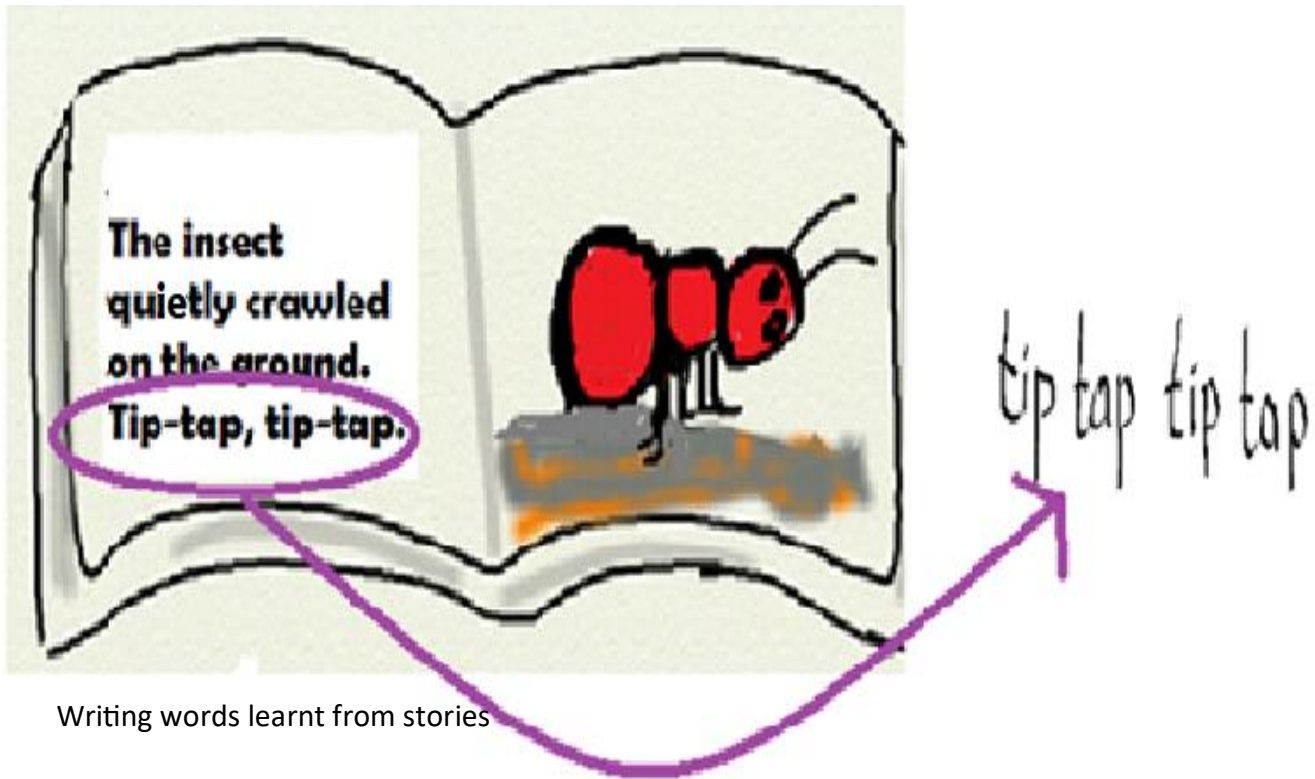
Writing Letters

You could together write the letters by joining closely made dotted lines that form the shape of letters. Again you will need to guide the child's hand and pencil, through the lines. With time, you could allow the child to lead while you follow, (rather than the other way round) as you hold the pencil with him or her. While you do this, describe the direction of the hand movement (up , down, curve etc.) to help the child master the shape of each letter. An alternative, would be to buy 'writing practice' books, with already made letters for colouring, as well as letters in dotted lines.



Learning to
write
letters

Having learnt how to trace letters, it would be good to try writing the letters without the dots but only a guide for the starting point. This would help the child learn to form the letters on his or her own and slowly even learn to write his or her own name. The child could then learn to copy down his or her favourite words from the stories that you read to him or her as shown in the picture below. This would also make the child attempt to begin writing down short sentences.



You could keep memories by taking videos of the child's first attempts to write his or her first and last names. Eventually, he or she could make sentences of day to day experiences, thereby keeping stories in the form of writings with words learnt from story books read to him or her - a good way of having those words on the tip of the tongue.

You could file the papers so that from time to time, you could, together with the child, go back down memory lane and treasure those heart warming moments. You as a parent could equally keep your own personal writings safe enough for future retrieval and reflections. This would help both of you get to know each other better and watch your growing process with appreciation.

When the child begins identifying the letters, you could quiz him randomly, and once in a while, on the letters forming the words you are reading to him from the children's book.

Chapter 1.3 - Read It Out




A good and careful selection of books could change a child's knowledge repertoire, values, vocabulary and character - introducing into a young mind, creative and productive thoughts. Reading books, such as Information books, Religious books or Story books, will always provide a thousand lessons that one could build on - for many years to come.

It is therefore, encouraged for parents to develop the habit of reading (if not already adopted) throughout one's life, so that as the child watches the parent read books, he or she too would long to learn how to read; beginning with sounding out a group of few alphabetical letters. This is an interesting journey that is delightful to watch, as the child eventually learns to read on his or her own.

Sounding Out Letters

Once the child is able to identify letters, you could begin matching them to words that begin with the same letter and most importantly, that are familiar to him or her. For instance, 'a' for apple, 'n' for net and 't' for truck. Then stress the sounds of the first letters of the words as you pronounce them. Eventually the child would learn to identify letters with the sounds they make.

Sounding out letters

| | | |
|--|--|---|
|  <p>a - aa...apple</p> |  <p>n- ne....net</p> |  <p>t - ti..truck</p> |
|--|--|---|

Blending Letter Sounds To Make Words



Finally reading short words

Sounding out two separate letters, such as 'a' and 'n' and then blending them to make the word 'an' makes the first words read. As the child learns to read several two letter words, you could then add a third letter to an already known word, to introduce three letter words.

a (sound the letter)

n (sound the letter)

a - n (begin to blend the sounds of the two letters)

an (combine the sounds to make one word)

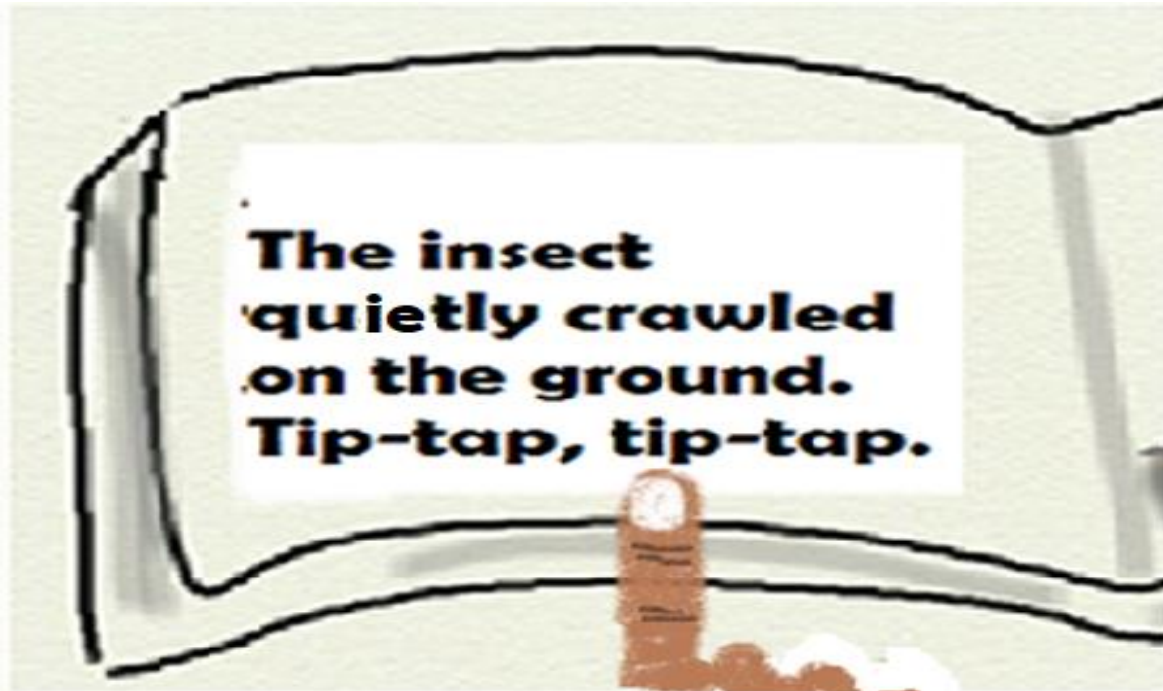
a-n-t (add a third letter and blend the sounds)

combine the sounds to make a single word)

ant - now the child can read the word from the first book on chapter one, aloud

Point At The Words As You Read

Four to five letter words involving sounds formed by combining two or three letters such as 'th', 'aw', 'ou' and 'qu', to read words such as 'the, crawl, ground and quiet eventually helping the child to read short story lines.



After learning to read, the child finally goes back to read the stories you the parent read to him or her

Reading His Own Story Books

As the child learns to read, you could go back to his previous story books. The child would find this very exciting and would appreciate how far he has come. Encourage the child to read out the words aloud with expressed emotion. This will help the child improve his or her story reading skills and equally learn to speak that way.

You could make the most of such moments by letting your child read a book to you as you politely correct him where applicable. With time, you could continue this trend to slightly more challenging books.

You could take videos of your child sounding out his first letters, through to when he begins to learn sounding out words and reading sentences. Learning to read simple stories, will encourage the child to read slightly more complex books and use such moments to always learn something new.

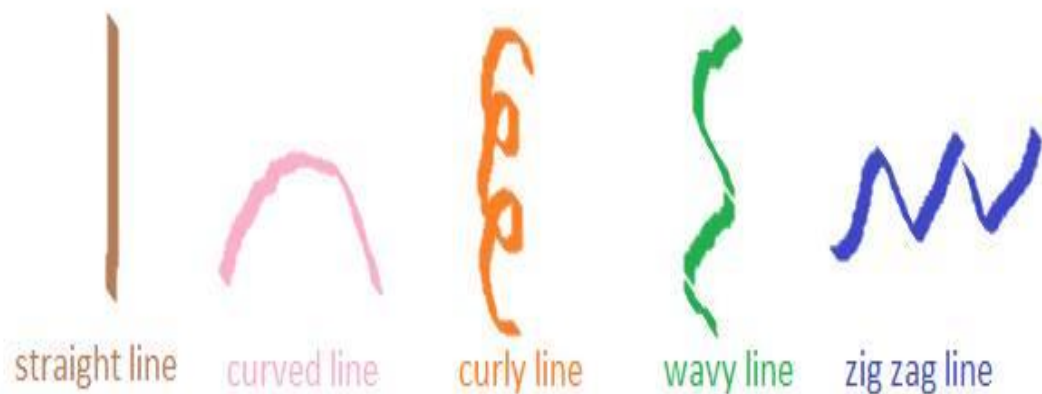
Chapter 1.4 - Illustrate The Main Idea

A child would normally be able to mentally group objects into simple shapes such as square or circle, as he or she express his or her thoughts. As the child's finger and hand co-ordination develops, the pencil hold strength improves with clearer and more elaborate drawings, revealing his or her unique capabilities. It can be a very useful tool to help a child comprehend a story - by summarising the main events of the story through drawings. Obviously the pictures in the story book would illustrate just that. The story of the ant from chapter one has been used to teach a child to draw. You may find your drawings just as elementary as those of your child's if you did not develop your drawing skills from childhood.

Crayon On Paper

Share drawing time with your child by leading the drawing session. You could use **wax** crayons to start with (wax crayons require very little strength to produce a strong print). Plain papers would be great for the child to scribble on. You could scribble with him or her by making up and down motions.

Learning to draw soon becomes fun as you structure the scribbles into definite kind of lines. Guide the child's hand to make movements of zig zag lines going up and down consistently. Curvy and curly lines going forward then round, are also useful in drawings. Later, you could move on to wavy lines that go up and down in curves.





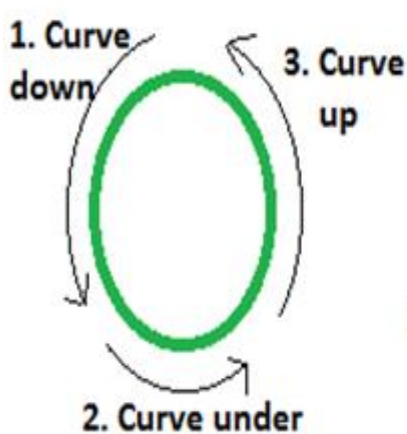
Using curvy lines to draw the antenna of an insect



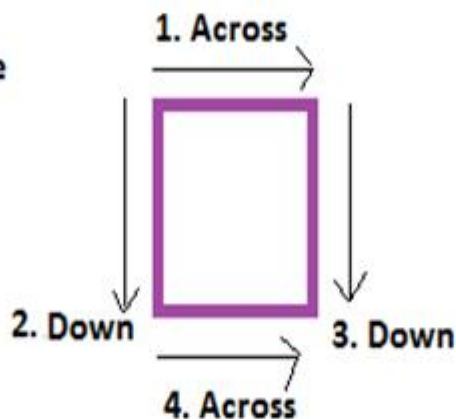
Forming Shapes

Continued mental stimulation such as books illustrating different types of shapes, playing items such as geometrical building blocks or any other items in different basic shapes would urge the child to master the formation of shapes and thereby enhance drawing skills.

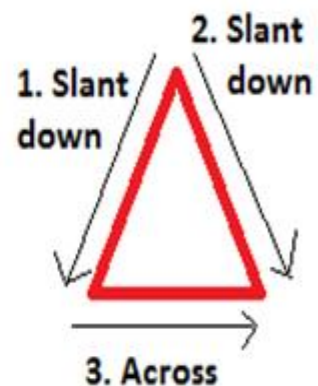
You could use straight lines to draw shapes such as rectangle, square, and triangle, and curved lines to draw circles. As you draw the shapes together, you could describe the path of the pencil, beginning from the top. Another guide to forming the lines would be to draw shapes with dotted lines that you and the child could easily join.



CIRCLE



SQUARE



TRIANGLE



After drawing curved lines for the antenna, use round shapes to draw the three body parts (head, thorax and abdomen) of an ant.

A Drawing That Tells A Story

A simple way to help the child draw to summarise a story is to draw a picture to show what the story was about. Use mainly the basic shapes and lines you taught your child . Do not mind if the shapes are not perfectly formed, this process improves with time.



After adding the body parts to the antenna, finish off by drawing straight lines to add the legs, and circles for the eyes.

The picture summary would describe what was learnt. Words would be easily used when a similar circumstance is faced in real life. You could help store up memories by categorising the best drawings and binding them to make organised pictorials- developing your own as well as your child's first little story books. It would be exciting to browse through them from year to year, looking back and appreciating the past experiences as depicted from the stories and inquiring what the child remembers from them. Through this you may appreciate the child's growth in his individuality as observed from his or her unique ideas.

Together learn to draw the antennae of an ant using curvy lines.

You could draw the ant's body by attaching three circles to the antennae, representing the head, thorax and abdomen.

Add two large dots at the bases of the antennae for eyes and then six thin legs to the bottom of the middle circle to depict legs coming from the thorax of the insect.



Chapter 2.0

Appreciating Nature

T

he need to love, take care and learn about nature around our homes is the fundamental way of learning to value life. Allocating time to explore and study nature with the whole family would create moments of common interest shared; a tradition that would help build a treasure of knowledge and moments that would bond the family.

One could develop a reference guide book by storing and labelling pictures taken, taking note to give each nature category its own folder for easy retrieval purposes. The nature studied could include birds, insects, rocks and plants. For easy identification, each picture could be labelled with a local or common name or alternatively, a reference from a scientific source, and a few personal notes, date and site. The process gives one a sense of accomplishment in one's work.

Chapter 2.1 - Rock Collecting

Rocks are a beautiful part of nature. Collecting a few would make a wonderful reminder of nature's beauty. Rock collection can be turned into an interesting hobby that you and your child could develop together. This hobby enables one to develop an eye for interesting and unique stones that one could keep, even for decorative purposes in or around the home.

Some Rocks Are A Food Spice

One rock that we see and use everyday but never pay attention to, is Halite. Halite is mined, processed and packaged for shops; and we purchase it in the form of table salt (fine grained) or rock salt (course grained). Purchase the rock salt and have a close look at it with your child whilst making your observations.



Course grained salt -
white in colour and
glassy-like,
with shapes of mostly
cubes.

Developing An Eye For Rocks Around The Garden - what to look out for

As you stumble across rocks, you could observe their;

- * Colour(s)
- * Shape
- * Size

Smooth or rough surface

Pattern or sparkles or its glassy nature of appearance

These features are enough for the child to make amazing discoveries on his or her own, and grow fond of observing the nature of rock whenever opportunity arises.

Some Rocks Are Used As Landscaping Decorations

Pebbles are naturally found on water banks such as rivers. River sand used for construction is therefore a good source of pebbles. Their smooth surface and round shapes look good in garden landscapes around fountains or on foot paths. Pebbles are also sold in gardening shops, so why not buy a few, if you can't find any around your home.



Pebbles - This pebble is oval in shape, brown in colour and has a smooth surface.

Some Rocks Are Used As Gemstones

Some rocks have a glassy appearance and are colourful. This marvel is therefore, used as gemstones in jewellery or as decoration in the house. The gemstone is embedded in necklaces and rings to add that beautiful sparkle to the metal ring or chain. The strength of rocks could also be seen in the long lasting of rings and necklaces such as those that have been passed on in families from one generation to another. Walk around your yard or neighbourhood and see if you could find any.

Caution : Due to children's habit of placing items into their mouths one needs to take care that the child does not do this as this could cause choking.

Collections

One could slowly begin keeping different types of rocks. Collections may include all types that you can find and then later have a special collection for similar ones . Eventually you could begin learning the names of the most common ones with the aid of a Mineral and rock guide book.

One could keep his collections in a transparent container strategically placed for easy viewing, or display the rocks on a shelf or window seal.

This would create a sense of achievement and would encourage the child to look for more and diverse types as he or she grows. As your rock collection interest grows, you and your child could even replace the old basic rocks, with new and more interesting ones. This is where it would be evident of each child's preferences in the value of rocks. This of course needs to be respected and appreciated by each child and still allow them to work together.



Purple quartz -This rock is glassy in appearance and purple in colour. The surface has thin straight lines and therefore slightly rough.



Chapter 2.2 - Gardening

Taking strolls through flower gardens enlightens the mind as one comes across sweet fragrances and beautiful coloured blossomed flowers. Picking out ready to eat vegetables and fruits and enjoying a tasty treat would draw your child to tremendous gardening interest and excitement in knowing the names of the different type of plants.

Enjoying The Significance Of Plants

Trees, vegetables and flowers, could all be part of your gardening. Trees to give us shade under a hot blazing sun (and home to most birds) and sometimes provider of different kinds of fruits; Vegetables to provide a very significant part of our daily diet and growing colourful flowering plants would attract birds and insects that feed on their nectar and pollen.

Guava tree - This fruit tree has green leaves. Its fruit, the guava, is green when raw and yellow when ripe.





Rose flower - This rose flower is pink with several petals.

Together with your child, try and identify the following:

- * colours on different plants
- * the number of petals on each flower

This would help the child (with time) pay attention to detail and appreciate the unique beauty in every type of flower.

Take care that the child does not eat any of the flowers as some of them may be poisonous.

Where To Find Plant Varieties

It is easy to widen your garden by picking flowering plants or stems from the gardens of friends and relatives. If you wish to grow your own nursery seeds they would easily be found from agriculture shops or markets. Some plant growers germinate seeds and sell the plants as seedlings.

Spending Time With Plants

Together you could plant a tree, flower or vegetable that you can work on. You could begin by tilling the soil ,planting seeds and watering . Later your could maintain the garden by pulling out sprouting weeds. This would help you appreciate the care that life needs as well as the fascinating way in which life continues. A sunflower seed takes a few days to germinate and is easy to maintain. The seeds it produces can be shelled and used as a food supplement in our morning cereal.

Stages of plant growth



The sunflower, has bright yellow petals and a brown centre which harbours the sunflower seeds. This plant can rise as tall as 1-2 m in height in its mature stage.

Try growing plants that you and your child have admired (or would like to grow as food) from books or other gardens, to learn the unique growth requirements of different plants. While you are at it, you could store memories by taking pictures

of you and the child planting and growing plants, thereby following the growth of the plants and your care for them. Take closer pictures of the plants, to add to your plant guide book.



Chapter 2.3 - Insect Studying

Children normally get attracted to crawling or flying insects and sometimes would even crawl or walk in their pursuit (especially during the first to second year of age). Insects are always a marvel to look at, for their individual unique colours, shapes and sizes as they crawl or fly around in search of food. Their vast variety is bewildering, and could urge one to begin learning the names and characteristics of the most commonly seen around the home and perhaps put to use their products, such as honey from bees or clay from ant hills.

Appreciating Insect Diversity

As the child begins to walk and run around, take an interest in walks with him around the yard and enjoy an insect hunt to look and view different types of insects. Most insects live on plants and a few under rocks; some live as parasites on birds and animals whilst others burrow and dwell in underground tunnels. You create a good home for insects by having rocks under which they could live and having plants and grass around your house on which they could feed on.

What To Look Out For

When you discover the presence of an insect in your home, you and your child could investigate or discuss the following;

- * It's colour(s)
- * It's mode of movement - crawling, leaping or flying
- * Its Shape - round, oval or long
- * Type of sound produced - buzzing, hissing or whistling
- * Type of smell it gives out - such as offensive
- * Type of food it feeds on - seeds, other insects, household foods, blood or nectar

You could use a magnifying glass to make the insect look bigger, if you feel it is too small to observe.

Insects Normally In Flight

Fluttering Butterflies, Dragon flies and buzzing Bees are some of the insects we can find in our flower gardens . Bees will normally be heard buzzing around as they fly from flower to flower to feed on pollen and nectar (pollen is what some types of bees use to make honey).



Bee on flower - The Bee is yellow with black stripes. It is generally oval in shape, It is normally flying whilst making a buzzing sound.

Insects Normally Motionless

Certain insects can stay in one position for long hours. Such insects are easy to study in terms of shape and body features. Insects such as the stick insect can lie motionless on a surface for hours on end, and only move around at night to feed on leaves.

Caution: Take care around bees as some types can sting; an experience which is rather painful.



Stick insect - This stick insect is brown and long, resembling a stick. It flies but normally stays in one spot for long hours.

Seasonal Insects

Some insects are only seen during certain weather conditions such as those that inhabit underground. After heavy rains, lots and lots of insects such as bugs, beetles, and white ants, leave their nests underground, and occupy the ground surface for a while as they try to make new nests. One particular example of this is the black stink bug.



Stink bug - This black, broad and flat, small insect is well known for its emission of foul smell. They normally invade homes when they come out of the ground during rainy seasons.

Try taking pictures of the insects in their food habitat, where you can, just to give that extra information about them, as you create your own simple insect guide book. As you learn their names, you could consider beginning with the conspicuous ones, easy to recall insects, because of colour, shape or habitat. This will give you overwhelming excitement over the knowledge you would have accumulated so far.

Chapter 2.4 - Birding



The sweet tweeting sounds of neighbourhood birds, that often fly in and out of our yards in the early mornings, are extremely soothing.

Some of which would reveal the magnificent beauty in the colour of their feathers. Big birds in flight are interesting to watch as they move swiftly in the sky displaying their big wings. You could have fun with your child by imitating their flight movement - slowly running and flapping them like a bird, giving that purifying moment as we view and learn to identify them.

The graceful flights of birds can symbolise the peace and freedom that birds enjoy during their time in the air as well as their good knowledge of the geography of the neighbourhood, country and continental regions. Migratory birds fly from one hemisphere to another year after year and always settle in the same areas, as they do this having learned their geography exceptionally well.

The world of children is very small and narrows to the home environment, but as they grow, interest to know what lies beyond their home, develops. This quest is important to grow as one grows older for one to broaden his or her self concept. Visiting and learning about the lives of other people, as well as the geography of other parts of our towns, countries or the world at large gives, one a very wide base for knowledge and experience.

House Birds

House birds linger in cities and neighbourhoods, throughout the year. Stepping outside to take a quiet and closer look (so you don't scare the birds away) would reveal its favourite calling spots. Such as roof tops, electric poles and wires, shrub or tree branches or even fences. Sometimes they walk or hop on the ground in search of seeds or insects. You could easily attract these birds and provide a home for them by growing small trees and shrubs around your home.



House Sparrow

House Sparrows - give 'chip', 'chirps' and 'chisick' calls and have a pointed beak. House birds generally have a combination of brown, grey and off white. They are generally small birds commonly build their nests in small openings between the house wall and roof of our homes. Observe how the mother sparrow frequently visits that cranny in the roof to take care of its nest.

One could care for neighbourhood birds by providing a constantly filled water bath. You could do this by using a shallow basin erected a meter and half or so from the ground, (preferably under a shade) for birds to drink and bath in. Day by day a new bird would have been seen and identified, and over time a multitude of birds would have been studied.

Domestic Birds -what to look out for

Many people keep birds such as chickens or ducks in their yards for meat or eggs or even looked after as pets. They are fed by mainly grains. Due to their non flying nature, (fly low for only short distances) such birds are normally chased around by children as an act of play. As you study their body features you could look out for the following;

- * Its type of call,
- * Beak type - pointed or blunt
- * Its Colour(s)
- * Type of feet - individual toes or webbed feet
- * Size - big or small



Duck -- This big bird gives a 'quack- quack' sound and has a blunt beak. Ducks come in different colours but this duck above, has white and black feathers. Take note of its unique webbed feet. Being domesticated, they can lay their eggs in the nests provided by the keepers and when they do, you could look out for newly hatched ducklings which grow with their parents.

Migratory Birds

Many birds flee their habitats for warmer areas, and abundant food , causing a habitual migration. Different birds have different survival requirements therefore, some birds will be observed to be out of sight during certain times of the year.

You could easily attract big migratory birds around your home with big trees and big water bodies such as ponds, for them to drink and bath in.

Big birds will also linger around on farms during harvest time of grain crops like corn. Small migratory birds such as widow birds or humming birds would be very happy if you provided them with blossomed flowers for nectar. The seasonal presence of high numbers of insects (highest during the rainy season) will also attract them..

As you observe the birds and take pictures and videos, you could take note of the features that strike you most, such as a bright colour(s) on the feathers, or a conspicuous size or call; Eventually you and the child could begin learning the names of the most common birds in your neighbourhood and learn how often they come during the year.



Widow bird - This bird gives a 'zeet', 'zeet', 'zeet', sound and has a pointed but short beak. It is a black, yellow and white small bird. Other widow birds have the colour red rather than yellow. The widow bird is commonly seen during rainy seasons and one could find its nest in trees.

Chapter 3.0

Discovering Art

Achievements in creative activities are among the greatest triumphs of a child for they are executed without any other motive than to realise one's own genius and individuality. This process also has a tranquil effect that proves to be a great escape in search of a peace of mind.

When one includes the child in activities that involve the feel of sand and making sand sculptures; exploring the different colours of paint using hands and fingers or discovering different music sounds as one strikes the notes with one's fingers, there is a strong connection between the soul and the mind, a tranquil soul calms the mind and inevitably the child learns to control his or her emotions and direct energy to finding and building in born potential through creativity. It is vital that the parent upholds and appreciates the child's individual uniqueness and personal integrity in order to understand the child's perception of art.

Chapter 3.1 - Water Painting



Water painting is one of the best ways of utilizing young creative minds to explore different primary colours and discover secondary ones. Bright, and soft colours alike, can brighten up the mind and lift up one's mood. Initially children just get fascinated by the colours produced at the stroke of the finger and then later, they get urged to paint something real; something that would bring intense drama and become their valuable historical document.

Learning Colours

Together you could discover and learn the different basic colours - red, blue, yellow and green through the creations of beautiful print pictures.

You could start off with finger prints, by tapping the paint with wet finger tips and pressing them onto clean paper. You could also try using paint brushes to learn different methods of painting and their different effects on paper. Encourage the child to make patterns as he or she makes those coloured prints or brush strokes, so that you could eventually end up with an abstract painting that you could hang on the wall. This would definitely lighten up the child's heart.

When the painting is finished, it would be wise to wash the water paint tray and brushes ,to keep the paint looking clean with colours easily identifiable.



Discover and learn the different basic colours

Developing A Picture Of Nature

A picture of a tree, sky and grass depicting the beautiful nature around us is a good way of enjoying outside painting. By using finger printing and other techniques, such as blotting and stroking , a child could easily develop a simple picture of nature.

One could paint a tree by starting with the tree trunk. Make big brown thumb prints going up from the centre of the bottom end of the paper, printed in a straight line.

Then you could add several big green circular finger movements at the top of the trunk as leaves. Lastly, add small red finger prints in the just painted leaves, to depict ripe fruits. Now the child would be evidently adding life to the painting just by the print of a finger. Such moments could open up the potential of a talented artist.



Finger painting
a tree

Later, after the child confidently learns the basic colours, you could enlighten him or her on how colours are developed, by mixing known colours to make secondary colours such as orange (red + yellow), purple (blue + red) and Green (yellow + blue).

Adding The Background

With developed child growth, it would be realised, by the child, that there is a sun, sky and grass missing from the painting. To add these, you could make numerous cotton wool blots for a puffy clouded sky. (fig 1). Then stroke (using a twig) paint on the bottom of the paper to add the grass (fig 2). Finally, add a big sun in the sky, (using cotton wool for the circle and a twig for the sun's rays) to get a whole new effect (fig 3). Now the painting is finished, and it will be expected to be different from the one illustrated below (which was done by my 5 year old daughter), because art portrays individuality, a gift that cannot be replicated by someone else.

Take note that the sky does not necessarily have to be blue, the grass green and the sun yellow.



Again I would like to suggest trying the painting using paint brushes and appreciate the difference in methods and effects. In place of the prints you could just paint up and down to make a brown thin rectangle for the tree trunk and then at its top end, with a small brush, paint in small circular motions to make one big round leaf greenery . Stroke the brush with blue paint, onto the upper part of the paper for the sky, make a yellow circle for the sun. Add the grass by making short upright strokes on the bottom part of the paper with a small brush. Peaceful and enjoyed frequent painting sessions could eventually produce elaborate works. Preserve your history by safely storing your outstanding paintings as the child learns and improves with time. Label them with name, age, date and title of painting (according to the way the child perceived it) on the bottom right corner. Take videos while your child paints, then frame and hang the painting in the house to begin a little family art gallery as well as to show acknowledgment of good work .Take pictures of the stored paintings as backup.

Chapter 3.2 - Sand Sculpturing



Sand can be a healing element through the sense of touch, if one steps onto it and runs the sand through one's hands. Children equally find this healing as they can sit for long periods of time, playing with sand and making moulds of different shapes whilst producing their individual creative ideas. As the child learns the fundamentals of sand sculpturing, the moulds could begin representing real objects; such as a birthday cake or a human figure.

Having A Feel Of Hand Moulding

To enjoy the feel of sand in your hands, you could get several scoops of wet sand and pile them up onto one spot to make a mountain. Complete it by patting it up to smooth-en its top and sides.

Another method of moulding is that of using containers such as plastic buckets, cups or pots and filling them up with damp sand. Pat the sand at its open end then invert the container and place it in a flat surface. Pat the top and carefully lift off the container to reveal the shaped sand mould.

Later with better hand coordination, you and the child could try and make sand balls, by rolling some wet sand between both hands to form a ball. You could make several different sized balls.

Taking care to avoid kicking or throwing sand into the air as this would result in getting sand into your eyes, which is rather painful.



Sand Man

With hand balls now easily moulded, try making a sand man. Simply roll two sand balls, with one bigger than the other, and place the smaller one (to make the head) on top of the bigger one (the body). To add the arms, pick a thin stick and break it into half then, let your child push in one piece, on both sides of the body. Add two more on the bottom to make legs so that the 'little human figure' appears to be sitting. Create eyes, nose and a mouth by making markings. At this point the sculpture makes a complete representation of a person, at least in the eyes of the sculptor.



A sand man with twigs to make hand and legs

The Finishing Touch

You could finish your sculpture by painting it with water paint. Simply wet your fingers and the paint tray; rub a finger on the desired colour and then gently blot the paint to your sculpture. You could together add all sorts of different colours as you run your imagination wild.



A painting a sand man by hand blotting

To sand moulds made using cups, you could equally decorate with small stones, sticks or whatever else you can get your hands on but not items too big or heavy that would crush the mould.

Sand sculptures do not last very long; once moulded, they slowly begin to dry up, and within a few days, crack and eventually crumble. Therefore, take videos/pictures during the making process. Appreciate the effort made by placing the sculpture on a suitable place in the house to add to the home interior beauty. Re use the sand when you are ready to make another one.

Chapter 3.3 - Piano Music

Moments of playing music can help one in maintaining a healthy and active mind. A child who plays a musical instrument expresses individuality by revealing precision and sincerity. An electric keyboard is ideal for learning as the first musical instrument, in my opinion. It is like a piano, only on a smaller scale, has soft touch and adjustable height. These attributes give it an advantage over stringed instruments like guitars or violins which require much needed finger and hand coordination and wind instruments such as recorders which require strong 'huffs and puffs' to blow through the instrument and therefore these would require the child to be of a much older age.

Getting Acquainted With The Keyboard

Playing instruments: The younger children have fun on the key board by strumming the keys with all five fingers. The more frequent you play the keyboard together, the more the child begins to pay attention to melody progression going up and down.

You could demonstrate keyboard playing to the child by placing your fingers on the keyboard notes, and gently pressing the finger tips down, one finger at a time. Enjoy making simple tunes of your own, as you strike the notes whilst moving up or down the keyboard (playing from the left end of the keyboard notes and moving towards the right end, and then vice versa). Notice that the piano or electric keyboard is divided into black and white notes. To do this exercise, one does not need to have prior knowledge of piano music.



The piano has white and black notes.

Improving Coordination

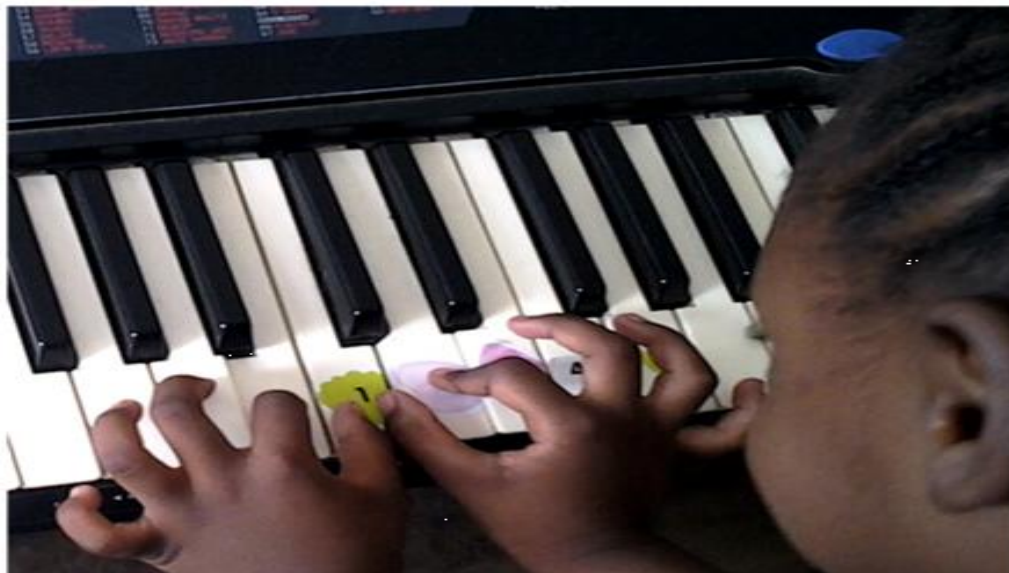


Placing fingers one to five on the keyboard

As the child progresses in hand coordination with age, you could focus on the building of fine motor skills, by numbering the child's fingers and pressing down only the *intended* ones. Beginning with the right hand, the thumb takes number 1, and the numbers on the rest of the fingers consecutively follow, until the little last one as 5. If you have number stickers at home, you could stick them onto the keyboard notes, to act as a reminder. (place stickers on consecutive white keys only, due to their broader width and easy accessibility).

The child could now play out the numbered fingers, one at a time, as he or she says out the respective finger number striking down the note (to enhance the child's focus). When the child gets comfortable and confident with this, you could later move on to the left hand; placing the thumb on note 1 and the rest of the fingers playing to the left of that note. Practically the child may now be said to know how to strike the keys and as the soul quests for soothing sounds, the mind will be pushed to figure out a simple tune such as that one frequently sing..

Left And Right Hand Coordination



Striking the notes with fingers on both hands

With consistency in shouting out finger numbers and striking the correct notes, the child could now begin playing fingers on both right and left hands simultaneously.

You could start by placing the left and right hands together on the keyboard notes. Let both thumbs share a single note and then place the rest of the fingers separately on the adjacent notes. You could now start playing the fingers simultaneously by beginning with the thumbs. Press down both thumbs on a single note, then move on to the next pair - index fingers, played on the adjacent notes, and then middle fingers, ring fingers and lastly the pair of the little fingers, taking care to only play one pair at a time, with each finger on its correct allocation. The fingers will gradually develop

flexibility with ease as harmonious melodies are made. Notice that when you play on the far left of the keyboard the melody will have a low pitch, whilst its right far end will give a high pitch.

Store memories by taking videos to record the production and performances of the child as he or she grows with amazing precisions. Take note of the delight that the child gets out of it, feeling the heart with peace and joy. Viewing the videos from time to time will drive your child to more enthusiasm, a wider variety of musical structure as well as an enhanced perfection in work.

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