

Home Schooling a Child with Down Syndrome:

Early Preschool Resources

*Preschool level material would
be for Down Syndrome
children about ages 3-4+*

*Before choosing resources, know
where your child is in his skill
development. Then you will know what
skills he needs to work on next and be
better able to choose the resources
you need.*

*Sample Skill list
for this age group:*

*Builds a tower of 9 blocks
Identifies some body parts
Matches primary colors
Copies a circle, vertical and
horizontal lines
Matching pictures*

After Early Intervention Ends

If you have chosen to do preschool with your child at home, the following information may be helpful. There are a few items to consider as you embark on your journey to teach your child.

Keep in mind as you look for resources for this age level—

- ∞ Even though your child is age 3 chronologically, he may still be working on skills relating to a child of age 2.
- ∞ Most preschool resources are aimed at normally developing children.
- ∞ A program may ask the child to answer questions and use verbal communication that your child does not have because of speech difficulties.
- ∞ Most children with Down Syndrome acquire the same skills as normally developing children but at a slower rate. The gap between normally developing children and a child with Down Syndrome widens as the child grows.

A list of skills for birth through about age 5 is useful for teaching your child at this level

You do not need a curriculum as such during this time. All you need to know is where your child is in his development and what skills come next. You might obtain such a list from the following sources:

- ∞ *The Brigance Inventory of Early Development.*
- ∞ Ask a friend who teaches preschool for a list of skills.
- ∞ Before letting your Early Interventionist go, ask for a list of skills.
- ∞ Ask other professionals that work with your child for a list such as your doctor, physical

therapist, occupational therapist, or speech therapist.

Expose your child to situations and places and use teachable moments

After you have a list of skills and know where your child is in his development, the best way to teach these skills is through everyday life experiences. Use chores and teachable moments as they arise to work on skills.

- ∞ Expose him to many environments: stores, church, friends' homes, playgrounds etc.
- ∞ Train him to obey his parents and caretakers. Teach him the meaning of the word "no."
- ∞ Train him to follow simple directions such as *Come see Mommy, Go to Daddy* and so on. This type of training will keep him safe.
- ∞ Model how to do and say things when situations arise. If you want him to learn to say "please" and "thank you," you and other family members need to be consistent in using the terms. (Use sign language with the verbal word as necessary until speech improves.)
- ∞ Teach him to sing songs and say simple Bible verses (using sign language as needed and repeat song CDs often).
- ∞ Work on identifying body parts.
- ∞ Constantly talk to him. Name objects, feelings, people, and so on.
- ∞ Be careful about the television and video programs that you expose him to at this age. He will not be able to tell the difference between what is real and what is fantasy.
- ∞ Self-help skills such as dressing skills are important at this age. Keep clothing simple so that he can begin to learn to be more independent. (He will learn to undress before learning to dress himself) Talk about clothes and vocabulary such as right-side-to

- and inside out, front and back. Show him the tag each time you help him dress. Let him feel that it is in back after he puts on his shirt. Use this time to expose him to left and right as you put on his shoes.
- ∞ Expose him to shapes in his environment and name them.
 - ∞ Begin to do simple knob puzzles. Since these are quite costly, your local library may have some preschool toys you can borrow.
 - ∞ Work on vocabulary as situations arise to use them: top/bottom; in/out; on/off; open/close and so on. Use the words orally as you put away clothing in drawers, put away toys, go in and out doors, turn the lights on and off, or take clothing on or off.
 - ∞ Identify your child and others as boys/girls; men/woman.
 - ∞ Identify colors. Help your child begin to match colors. There are games in teacher stores for this or you can make your own.
 - ∞ Allow your child to use crayons to begin to mark on paper. See if he will copy you to make vertical and then horizontal lines and then circles.
 - ∞ Purchase a photo or picture card set of every day items. Place 2-3 cards on the floor and say the name of a picture. Then have your child point to the picture you name. Later, direct your child to name the picture. You can also use your own camera and take pictures of things that are in your child's environment. Get a double set and you can also play a matching game. (The photos may need to be covered with clear vinyl paper for longevity.)
 - ∞ Expose him to animals and their sounds.
 - ∞ Help him string large beads on a stiff string (Narrow fish tank tubing makes a great stiff line for threading large beads).

- ∞ Read to your child. Keep the time short and positive, even if you do not get to finish the book. Point out the pictures and name what he sees.
- ∞ Begin matching activities with pictures used in simple memory games and with objects. For example, gather 2-3 pairs of socks that are very different in color and size. Mix them all up and guide your child as he matches them.
- ∞ Build towers of blocks.
- ∞ Write his name for him to see. Perhaps put his name at his eye level on his bedroom door and his place at the table.
- ∞ Sometimes children with Down Syndrome do not know how to use their toys. Teach them what to do if this is the case.
- ∞ Enjoy and set aside a special playtime to have with your child during this stage in life.

RESOURCES

❖ **Brigance Inventory of Early Development-Revised (Birth-Age 7)**

This diagnostic manual would provide a checklist of skills for those families that wish to do preschool at home. Use items you have around the house to teach concepts on the skills list. For the concept of *big* or *little*, gather a big stuffed bear and a little one and your lesson for the next three minutes is complete. Your child will be having such fun and he will be developing a positive attitude toward learning. To use this resource as a checklist, check off skills he currently knows in each area. Then work on the next few skills on the list. Work on the skills that he is already close to obtaining. It is all right to skip around a little on the list. Let's clarify with an example. If the next skill in the area of Fine Motor is *unscrews one-inch lids*, you might work on this one for over a year

before his muscles are ready for this developmental skill. However, the skill after screwing is *sorting dissimilar objects*. Your child may be able to obtain this skill in a month. So it is all right to skip skills on the list and look at the next few to decide which one to work on. (See the *Early Intervention* pamphlet for details about this resource.)

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❖ **Slow and Steady Get Me Ready: A Parents Handbook** By June R. Oberlander

This book gives 260 weekly developmental activities from birth to age 5. While some activities may be difficult because of lack of speech or fine motor skills, there are many very appropriate activities too. It does not have an extensive developmental checklist, but it may be helpful in giving you some ideas for activities.

Mommy Knows Best

Not all of the activities mentioned on this page will be appropriate for your child. You know your child best and will need to decide what your goals are for your child as an early preschooler. May the Lord give you the guidance and wisdom needed for your journey.

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