



Leaps & Bounds



PARENTING PRESCHOOLERS

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This newsletter is also  
on our website:  
**taylor.uwex.edu**

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**Healthy screen use for families with toddlers**

In most American households, screens now outnumber family members. Smartphones, tablets, laptops and televisions are part of everyday life for many families and children. With screen media playing a bigger role in our lives, how can parents know how much, and what kind of screen time, is healthy for their young children?

Recently, a team of University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living educators worked with Dr. Heather Kirkorian of the UW-Madison Human Development and Family Studies department to learn more about the ways that screen media affect toddlers.

Kirkorian notes that while limiting screen time for toddlers is important, families can have positive interactions around screens, too. “Young children need interactions with real people and 3D objects to learn language and meet other developmental milestones,” says Kirkorian, “However, parents do not need to completely avoid screen time. There are positive, intentional ways to interact with your toddler around screens.”

Kirkorian shared the following suggestions from the national group Zero to Three (<http://www.zerotothree.org>) on ways parents can positively incorporate screen time into their toddler’s life.

- **Watch and play together.** Toddlers learn from interacting with adults. Rather than handing your toddler the tablet or your smartphone, sit down with your child and talk about the game, ask questions about what you see on the screen, dance to a song together, and take turns.
- **Connect to the real world.** “Screens are just one piece of your child’s education,” explained Kirkorian, “Extend concepts that were introduced on a screen to everyday life. For instance, if you saw a short video about the zoo, take your child to the zoo or play zoo with her stuffed animals. Maybe your child traced the alphabet using a tablet; now point out letters on street signs or in books as well. This helps kids connect what they see on screens to their real life.”
- **Use intentionally.** Background television (TV that is on all day) is the most harmful type of screen time for children and should be avoided because it distracts kids from learning through play, observation, and conversation. “Turn off screens when not in use, keep them out of bedrooms, and consider watching adult television shows when kids are asleep,” says Kirkorian.
- **Content matters.** Not all media content is created equally. Young children don’t benefit from fast or flashy shows or apps. “Toddlers learn best from video or app content that reflects their own experiences, strong story lines that they can easily understand, and slow-paced interactions so they have time to process what is happening,” explains Kirkorian.



For more tips on parenting toddlers, visit UW-Extension’s *Parenting the Preschooler* website. *Parenting the Preschooler* offers tips related to all aspects of caring for toddlers, from nutrition to literacy to sleep. Visit <http://fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler> or contact the Taylor County UW-Extension office, 715-748-3341

Don’t forget to consider adults’ screen use, too. “Kids are more likely to act out when parents are distracted,” says Kirkorian, “Model healthy behavior with your phone or other screens. Have some screen-free zones or times, like mealtime, when you focus on each other rather than a screen.”

## Parenting Styles

[fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/](http://fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/)

### Practical Tips for Parenting

- ◆ Give your child choices such as what color socks to wear or choosing between two vegetables for a snack.
- ◆ Accept your child's feelings when she is angry, sad, or frustrated. Saying "I can see you're upset" doesn't mean giving in; it helps identify emotions and tells the child you understand.
- ◆ Use words like "good" or "bad" to describe behavior, not to describe the child.
- ◆ Clearly explain the behavior you expect in advance. For example, before a shopping trip say "You must stay in the cart and we won't be buying anything that's not on the list. Would you like to add one item to the list before we get there?"
- ◆ Set limits based on your child's development and consistently follow through by providing consequences that relate to the behavior.
- ◆ Praise positive behavior and always reaffirm love for your child.



Photograph by Paula Cartwright



Photograph by Mai Yia Thao

### Balancing Care, Discipline, and Respect

By giving your child freedom of thought and expression, enforcing limits, and practicing positive communication, you can solve problems and promote responsibility in your child.

## Parenting Styles

Identifying your style—as a parent, do you relate more to A, B or C?

### A

I know what's best for my child because I am the parent.

My child should obey me and be punished if they do not.

When my child misbehaves, I yell and threaten.

### B

I give my child choices and their own sense of individuality.

I have high standards and enforce the rules consistently.

I serve as a role model for my child by modeling the respect that I expect them to give me.

### C

I do as much as I can for my child because he/she is only a child for a short time.

If I discipline my child, I'm afraid he/she won't love me.

I typically let my child do what he/she wants because I dislike conflict.

Although you may have identified with more than one group, based on the one to which you related most closely, your parenting style is likely:

The Enforcer

The Negotiator

The Yielder

## Using Your Strengths

Many parents use a mixture of styles at various times, but striving to be a Negotiator parent (type B) is best to help children develop inner discipline.

Enforcer parents (Type A) often use strict punishment and allow very little freedom. Yielder parents (Type C) often view their children as friends and have few limits or demands for their children. If you relate to either of these parenting styles, don't feel bad! You have great strengths as a parent, but remember that balance is important for children.

Yielder parents' strength is love and acceptance but it's important to think how giving in might

affect the child long term. Will your child feel entitled? Or learn patience?

Enforcer parents have the strength of clarity and high expectations. However, showing sensitivity to your child will be key in helping your child understand that "tough love" is rooted in "love" and not just "tough."

Negotiator parents combine love, limits, and respect with consistent, fair expectations. Research shows that the Negotiator produces the best outcomes for children's health and well-being, including: responsibility, compassion, problem-solving skills, self-control, and acceptance of self and others.

### UW-Extension Family Living Programs

"Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well"



For more information, please contact your county UW-Extension office:

<http://counties.uwex.edu/>

[Link To References](#)

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# Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters



## Do any of the statements below remind you of your child?

**“Ebony will only eat peanut butter sandwiches!”**

**“Michael won’t eat anything green, just because of the color.”**

**“Bananas used to be Matt’s favorite food, now he won’t even touch them!”**

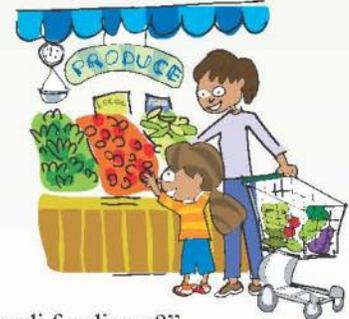
Your child may eat only a certain type of food or refuse foods based on a certain color or texture. They may also play at the table and may not want to eat. Don’t worry if your child is a picky eater. Picky eating behavior is common for many children from the age of 2 to 5 years. As long as your child has plenty of energy and is growing, he or she is most likely eating enough to be healthy. If you have concerns about your child’s growth or eating behavior, talk to your child’s doctor.

## How to cope with picky eating

Your child’s picky eating is temporary. If you don’t make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help you deal with your child’s picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

**Let your kids be “produce pickers.”** Let them pick out fruits and veggies at the store.

**Have your child help you prepare meals.** Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.



**Offer choices.** Rather than ask, “Do you want broccoli for dinner?” ask “Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?”

**Enjoy each other while eating family meals together.** Talk about fun and happy things. If meals are times for family arguments, your child may learn unhealthy attitudes toward food.

**Offer the same foods for the whole family.** Don’t be a “short-order cook,” making a different meal for your child. Your child will be okay even if he or she does not eat a meal now and then.



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## Trying new foods

Your child may not want to try new foods. It is normal for children to reject foods they have never tried before. Here are some tips to get your child to try new foods:



*“Let them learn by serving themselves. Teach them to take small amounts at first. Tell them they can get more if they are still hungry.”*

■ **Small portions, big benefits.** Let your kids try small portions of new foods that you enjoy. Give them a small taste at first and be patient with them. When they develop a taste for more types of foods, it’s easier to plan family meals.

■ **Offer only one new food at a time.** Serve something that you know your child likes along with the new food. Offering more new foods all at once could be too much for your child.

■ **Be a good role model.** Try new foods yourself. Describe their taste, texture, and smell to your child.



*“They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and vegetables and your child will too.”*

■ **Offer new foods first.** Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal.

■ **Sometimes, new foods take time.**

Kids don’t always take to new foods right away. Offer new foods many times. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.

## Make food fun!

Help your child develop healthy eating habits by getting him or her involved and making food fun! Get creative in the kitchen with these cool ideas. Check the ones you try at home, and be sure to add your own ideas, too!



*“Make meals and memories together. It’s a lesson they’ll use for life.”*



**Cut a food into fun and easy shapes with cookie cutters.**

**Encourage your child to invent and help prepare new snacks.** Create new tastes by pairing low-fat dressings or dips with vegetables. Try hummus or salsa as a dip for veggies.

**Name a food your child helps create.**

Make a big deal of serving “Maria’s Salad” or “Peter’s Sweet Potatoes” for dinner.

**Our family ideas to make food fun:**

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**For more great tips on these and other subjects, go to:**  
[ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers/](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers/)

## Tax credits a help to state's working families

Many low- and moderate-income working families in Wisconsin may qualify for thousands of dollars in tax credits at tax time. Together, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the state Earned Income Credit can provide anywhere from a few dollars to more than \$8,000, depending on household income, marital status, and number of children in the household.

Specifically designed for households with earnings, the credits are intended to supplement the wages and thus increase the purchasing capacity of employed households. Workers can receive the credits even if their incomes are too low to pay any income taxes.

“For many hard-working families, earnings still don’t cover basic needs; these tax credits are a vital source of supplemental income,” says Judith Bartfeld, UW-Extension food security research and policy specialist and professor at UW-Madison. “The tax credits help workers and their families, and also help communities, since the money goes back into the local economy.”

To qualify for the EITC, people need to have had at least some earned income from work during 2015. The specific income limits depend on marital status and number of children in the household. For unmarried households with children, the income limits range from \$39,131 with one child to \$47,747 with three or more children; limits are several thousand dollars higher for married households.

The federal EITC ranges from a few dollars to over \$6,000; the Wisconsin credit—which is available to any households with children that qualify for the federal credit—can be as high as \$2,122. The highest credits are available to households with three or more children. Credit amounts also vary with income, and gradually decline in value as income approaches the cut-off.

Eligible people must file taxes to receive these credits, and must specifically claim the credits on their returns. Both federal and Wisconsin taxes must be filed in order to receive both of the credits.

Every year, thousands of eligible families miss out simply by not filing a return. People who may not have been eligible in the past are more likely to miss out, as are non-English speakers, people with



changes in household circumstances, and those whose income is too low to otherwise have to file tax returns. People new to Wisconsin may not be familiar with the state EIC, as it is not available in all states.

Filing a Wisconsin tax return also allows many people to claim the state Homestead Credit. This credit is intended to offset the impact of rent and property taxes on low- and moderate-income households. It is available to both renters and homeowners with incomes up to \$24,680 and can be worth as much as \$1,168.

### Website provides information

To help eligible households learn about these tax credits, UW-Extension has developed a website providing detailed information—including information on eligibility and benefits, links to tax forms, links to find free tax assistance, and more. The website, which can be found at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/etc>, also provides resources for groups interested in helping to get the word out about the tax credits.

For individualized free help in filing taxes and claiming tax credits, taxpayers can visit a Tax Credit for the Elderly (TCE) site that provides service to low and middle-income tax filers.

In Taylor County, AARP provides free tax preparation help for the elderly who are filing Homestead Credit, Federal income Tax, and Wisconsin Income Tax. Appointments may still be available March 18 and April 1 at the Multipurpose Building on the fairgrounds. Call 715-362-8266.

## Get the Credit You Deserve!

2015 Tax Year	Qualifying Rules	Maximum Credit	Qualifying Children*	2015 Earnings	Tax Forms Needed
<b>Federal Earned Income Tax Credit</b>	Worked in 2015 and had a qualifying child living with you at least 6 months in 2015.	\$6,242 \$5,548 \$3,359 \$503	3+ 2 1 No children and worker between 25-64	up to \$47,747 (\$53,267 married filing jointly) up to \$44,454 (\$49,974 married filing jointly) up to \$39,131 (\$44,651 married filing jointly) up to \$14,820 (\$20,330 married filing jointly)	Federal tax return (Form 1040 or 1040A), including Schedule EIC
<b>Wisconsin Earned Income Credit</b>	Worked in 2015 and had a qualifying child living with you at least 6 months in 2015.	% of Federal EIC: 34% 11% 4% 0%	3+ 2 1 0	Families with qualifying children who claim the Federal EIC are automatically eligible for the Wisconsin EITC.	Wisconsin tax return (Form 1 or 1A)
<b>Federal Child Tax Credit</b>	Worked in 2015 and had a qualifying child living with you at least 6 months in 2015.**	\$1,000 per child	per child	Earned at least \$3,000 in taxable income.	Federal tax return (Form 1040 or 1040A) and Form 8812
<b>Wisconsin Homestead Credit</b>	Live in Wisconsin for all of 2015 and be over age 18.	\$1,168	N/A	Less than \$24,680 (plus \$500 for each dependent living with you more than half of 2015)	Wisconsin Schedule H or H-EZ (and Rent Certificate if you're a renter)



\*A qualifying child is a biological or adopted or step child, grandchild, niece, nephew, sibling, or authorized foster child. For the EITC, children must be under 19, or under 24 if fulltime student, or any age if disabled; for the Child Credit they must be under 17 AND claimed as a dependent on your tax form.  
 \*\* For the Federal Child Tax Credit noncustodial parents with a divorce agreement allowing them to claim the child as a dependent do not have to live with the child for 6 months.

For more detailed information, VITA sites and to download tax forms, see <http://fyi.uwex.edu/eitc/resources/>



Taylor County

County-USDA Ag Service Center  
925 Donald Street, Room 103  
Medford, WI 54451

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## Financial Coaching for Individuals

### A free service available through UW-Extension

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*Refresh or acquire financial management skills.*

- *Set your own financial goals.*
- *Assess your income.*
- *Learn how to track your spending and create a spending plan.*
- *Manage debt.*
- *Increase your savings.*



For an appointment or more information, contact  
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