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Teaching A Skill
Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service
4-H Club Bulletin Leaflet Series
Fay Moeller, Family Life
Issued January 1956
7 pages

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Teaching A Skill



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TEACHING A SKILL

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Requirements:

This Child Care unit is more difficult than some of the others.

You can find out many things about children by watching them and reading about them.

If you will discuss what you have seen and heard and read with your parents and your leader, you will be better able to use the most accepted methods of teaching.

WHAT YOU DO

1. Choose a child to whom you would like to teach a skill, such as buttoning his coat or putting on his overshoes.
2. Decide on the particular skill you wish to teach him.
3. Collect all the equipment you will need.
4. Practice teaching the skill. You might do this with another club member.
5. Teach the child the skill.
6. Keep a record of what you did and what you observed in your 4-H Child Care Record Book.

*University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn. With certain minor changes adapting it to Michigan needs, this publication is a reprint of Leaflet No. 32 issued by the Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Connecticut. It is reprinted for use of Michigan 4-H Clubs through the courtesy of the author and the Connecticut Extension Service.

CHILDREN NEED ROUTINE

No matter how old a child is or what his personality is like, he must feel secure if he is to learn new ideas and ways of doing things.

A young child gets a feeling of security from having an orderly day - eating, sleeping, playing, and being kept clean in much the same way every day.

A child does not mind change if, most of the time, he has things happening to him in the way he is used to having them.

The reason why routine is so important to a young child is that he has so much to learn - so many new and exciting things happen every day in his life. A child must be able to anticipate some of the things that are going to happen to him if he is to feel comfortable.

A CONSISTENT ADULT

A child develops and learns better when the adult who takes care of him is consistent.

To be a consistent adult, you must have made up your mind about what you think is good for children; you need to know how children grow and develop; you need to be able to use this knowledge so that it will fit the individual child's situation; you need to really like children; and you need to be a reasonable person...That's a lot to ask from one person, isn't it?

If you decide to do this unit, keep two things in mind:

1. An adult can plan a child's day so that it is good for the child.
2. A child will grow and develop better if the adult who cares for him is lovingly consistent.

A child will more easily learn the skill you are trying to teach him if you can get his cooperation. Making a child feel happy about what he does or tries to do will help to get his cooperation.

Teaching a young child a skill takes time, patience and planning. Before you start to teach any of the skills suggested in this leaflet, think over your plan. Then discuss it with the child's parents and with your leader.

You will need to decide what equipment you might need to make the skill easily taught and learned. Go through the plan, step by step, and make any changes that you think might help it to fit the child.

Discuss your final plan with your leader.

The following example might help you in planning to teach a skill. Keep three things in mind:

1. You do some things, because you know the child can't.
2. The child does some things by himself...You know he can.
3. You and the child do some things together. You know that, with some help, he can do part of the job.

Example of teaching a child (2½ - 3½) to take off his wraps and hang them up.

When the child comes in from outdoors, make sure that he is close to a low hook that he can reach. Suppose he has on a coat with three buttons, a pair of ski pants with side and leg zippers, wool mittens, and a cap with a strap that goes under his chin and snaps on the opposite side.

First you start in on your jobs (the things you know he is unable to do). You unbutton his coat. You start the zippers on his ski pants. You unsnap the straps of his cap.

Now it's the child's turn to do the jobs he is able to do by himself. Step back and let him do all the things he can. These might be:

1. He takes off his cap and mittens and hangs them on the hook. Perhaps he drops one - if so, don't run to pick it up. He is able to do that.
2. He takes off his coat (if it is loose enough) and tries to hang it up. You don't insist that he hang it by the collar - you're satisfied if he just gets it to stick on the hook. If he works hard at it but cannot get it to stay, you put the coat on the hook (in order to help the child succeed). Don't give him any help unless he needs it, though.

If the child's coat is tight you'll probably need to help him to start getting out of it. Have you ever seen a colt trying to shake off a harness? Encourage the child to use the same motions, twisting and wriggling his shoulders. Stand beside him and twist your shoulders as you push the sleeve with your hand. Encourage him with words, too. You might say something like this to him: "That's right. Wriggle out of it. You can do hard things."



3. Once the coat is off, the child may go ahead and pull the zippers in his ski pants. When he has them completely unzipped, he pushes them down and sits on the floor, waiting for you to pull them over his heels. Do a good job of this - make it easy for him to either push the ski pants off his feet or pull his feet away from them.
4. He then gets up by himself and tries to hang up his ski pants. As with the coat, you may have to watch out of the corner of your eye to see whether the pants are going to stick on the hook. If not, you come to the child's rescue, in order to help him succeed.

His wraps will probably look jumbled, but remember, it took real effort and patience on the child's part to get them there at all.

If you thrill with the child in his growing independence, if you wish for self-care as a part of his growing up, you'll be able to say to him with real feeling, "I'm proud of you. You can do hard things."

It is very important, in every routine skill that you try to teach, that you be consistent in:

The jobs you do for the child

The jobs you do with the child

Your willingness to help the child help himself.

SUGGESTED SKILLS TO TEACH A YOUNG CHILD

NOTES

Button coat
Put on rubbers
Put on overshoes
Zip jacket
Zip leggings
Take off and hang up wraps
Unzip and take off coat and leggings
Put on and fasten pajamas
Put on other clothing (and fasten it when possible)
Answer the telephone and call someone to the phone
Answer the door and call someone to the door
Learn his name and address and his father's name

This unit does not include the teaching of social skills. Teaching these requires a great deal of experience, knowledge and training.

HELPFUL BOOKS AND LEAFLETS

These references will help you understand what children are like:

Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care by Benjamin Spock, M.D. Pocket Books, Inc., Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 1949.

Children Can Help Themselves by Marion Lerrigo. MacMillan Company, New York, N.Y. 1943.

NOTES

Cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics. Michigan State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Paul A. Miller, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, East Lansing. Printed and distributed under acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914.