

Four Fun Ways To Teach Colors

By: Shara Lawrence-Weiss

THERE are various lines of thought when it comes to early childhood parenting. Here are three of them:

1. My child will learn what he/she needs to know when school begins. That's what the teachers get paid for. Until then, we watch TV. Disney teaches her plenty of stuff right now.
2. My child **MUST** be ahead of every kid when school begins. Anything less would be embarrassing. We run drills daily for math, reading, colors, etc.
3. My child loves to learn and we attempt to make our home a learning environment. We don't push but we do encourage learning. School will help to solidify what's already been taught at home.

Does it hurt to turn our home into a fun learning environment so our kids will joyfully pick up basic concepts, prior to beginning more formalized schooling...Nope?

Here are a few fun ways to teach colors!

1. Create Color Baskets:

- Head to the Dollar Store and pick up colored baskets. Fill them with items from around the home: caps, lids, fabrics, toys, left over items that would otherwise be tossed out (re-purpose!), etc.*
- Pull out the baskets each day and play.
- Have your child help put the items back into the baskets when clean-up time comes: "Okay – pass me the RED lid now. That will go into the RED basket!"
- Here, you are clearly teaching your child his/her colors in a fun way. At this age most kids want to be helpers. They strive for the positive feedback that tells them, "I'm helping out and I'm needed here. I have a purpose!"
- Color Baskets are perfect for this. For an additional spin, write the color on each basket in black marker. Be sure to spell the word like they will in school (NOT in all CAPS): Blue and Red and Green and Yellow. Write it the way they will learn it!

**Keep choking hazard items out of the baskets.*

2. Use personal photos:

- Take photos of your child wearing specific colors.
- Glue the photo to the same color paper. Label the back of each one: Blue; Red; Green; Yellow; Pink; Purple; Black; White, Etc.
- Laminate for longer use and use the color cards in the car, on road trips, while standing in line at the post office, on a plane ride, in the grocery store, etc.
- You've now created homemade color toys. Personalized, interactive and fun! What kid doesn't enjoy looking at their own picture, eh?
- The colors will be learned quickly and without any drilling needed. Simply say: "Hey. You're looking at the red photo. Cool! Turn that over. See? It says RED. Pretty neat."
- Hole punch the corners and attach a flip ring for another alternative (keep in the diaper bag for easy use).

3. Create a color book:

- Create a homemade book using your child's photos. Snap pictures of your child wearing specific colors and glue those to paper. Write the color word under each photo. There's no need to scrapbook this. In fact, too many images and too much text will detract from your child learning the concepts.
- A simple photo and one word are perfect for this age group.
- Staple or string the book together for use in the car, at bedtime, etc.
- Enjoy the book together and chat about it; in a non pushy environment. "Oh – look. There's the BLUE page. I love that page! That BLUE shirt is fabulous."
- In no time, the colors will be learned.

4. Head to the grocery store:

- The grocery store is one of the easiest, most effective places to teach concepts to a child. As you shop, point out the signs, words and colors.
1. "Check that out. That juice bottle is orange. I like orange."
 2. "See that banana? It's yellow. Do you like yellow bananas?"
 3. "The cheese is white. We use that cheese when we make your favorite Italian pasta dinner. You love that white cheese."

5. "The tomatoes are very red today. I wonder if they taste good, too?"

- Point, talk, ask questions and allow your child to answer, in their own time. If they don't answer, fill in the blanks. Soon enough, they'll be answering quickly, wanting to please you and show off their new found knowledge. At that point, a high five or hug is in order: "Great job kiddo – well done!" All humans like positive feedback; children are no different.

Teaching colors need not be a drill of any kind. 23+ years of working with kids has taught me this: Make it FUN and they will learn. In fact, they'll WANT to learn and they'll RETAIN the information more quickly and more effectively.

Off you go, then! Happy color teaching....



Shara Lawrence-Weiss is the owner of Mommyperks, a company dedicated to helping small mommy-run businesses succeed, and a freelance writer whose pieces have been published locally, nationally and globally in journals and magazines with a background in education and 23+ years working with children. For more ideas please contact Shara at info@earlychildhoodnews.net or visit www.mommyperks.com.