

Encouragement Helps Nurture Kids' Talents

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Some kids' talents are obvious: A standout on the soccer team. Or, a quick study on the violin. Or, a whiz at math.

Other children's talents aren't as visible, but they're there: Each child has a special talent of some kind, and parents can play a major role in helping the child find it.



To help your children find their gifts, give them some freedom to grow and explore, says the American Psychological Association. (APA). Tight rules and schedules can stifle a child's gift.

Children need opportunities to dream, to explore and to talk about it, the APA says. Set a basic schedule, but be flexible.

The APA and other child experts suggest these techniques for encouraging children to develop their interests:

- Be a role model. Work hard on your own hobbies and interests.
- Provide a broad range of extracurricular opportunities such as Scouting, a sports team or the school choir.
- Catch your children being good. Don't ignore them when they are quiet and engrossed in an activity. Reinforce this with praise.
- Help children advance without over-challenging them. If your children like to pick out tunes on the piano, read to them aloud about a musical role model, browse in a music shop or suggest lessons.
- Allow your children to try out an array of activities. Observe which prompts the most enthusiasm.
- Support the choices your children make, even if they are not the ones you expected.
- When a performance doesn't meet expectations, praise your children for the attempt. It's less likely they'll give up.

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