

COMPUTERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Our world is full of computers and other technology that children will use everyday. Parents and caregivers often wonder *if* and *when* their young children should learn how to use the computer.

- Most experts agree that children under the age of 3 should not use computers (Haughland, 2000). Children younger than 3 are working on skills such as crawling, walking and talking. They learn by using their bodies and senses. They are constantly moving and have short attention spans, so computer activities are not a good choice for this age group.
- Computer programs for 3 and 4 year olds need to give children plenty of time to experiment and explore. Children need to feel that they are in control of the computer. Programs that focus on drills and right answers can be frustrating and difficult. Programs that let them draw, paint, and dictate stories are the best for this age group.
- Learn the program yourself first, and then teach it to your children. If you do the program together, you can help them if they get stuck. Often, children will catch on quickly, and soon become the "experts".
- Computers can help children discover new ideas, increase manual dexterity, verbal skills and problem solving (Bowman, 2000; Haughland, 2000). But, like anything else, a limit should be placed on the amount of time your child spends at the computer. Make sure your children have plenty of time for other types of play.

*Bowman, Barbara (2000) Equity and young children as learners. ERIC, Catalog #222.
Haughland, Susan W. (2000) Computers and young children. ERIC Clearinghouse.*

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