

Puzzles - A Fun Way to Use Your Fingers! Ages 4-5

Working with puzzles helps your child:

- Exercise the small muscles in the hands that will later help with writing
- Focus the eyes and the hands to work together as pieces are placed
- Sharpen visual skills as children begin to “see” where each piece fits



Ideas to try with your child:

- To start, offer puzzles with 5-10 pieces that hook together. Encourage your child to work the puzzle until he finds it “too easy.” Increase the number of puzzle pieces or use those with more complex pictures.
- Look for large floor puzzles that several children can work on together.

If your child is struggling:

- Start with puzzles that have one spot for each piece. Many of these have knobs for a child to hold onto.
- Wooden puzzles are easier to work with than foam or cardboard ones.
- Work the puzzle with your child. Pick up a piece and pause, saying, “Hmmm I wonder where this goes?” Make some mistakes in the placement at first. Explain when you have succeeded. “The whale’s tail is blue so it goes here.”

Going further:

- Make your own puzzles! Cut out one side of a cereal box or use an extra copy of a family photo glued onto lightweight cardboard to make your own puzzle. Cut apart with straight or curvy lines and put back together.
- Foam puzzles are more difficult to manipulate. For a real challenge, try an alphabet puzzle made of foam.

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children’s best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children ages 4-5** that parents can help improve at home.