

PSYC 430: Cognitive Development
TERM PROJECT TOPICS

1. *My best friend Flora and I have sons who are close to the same age. Both her son, Jerry, and my son, Ronny, have summer birthdays. Flora has just told me that she plans to delay Jerry's entry into kindergarten by one year, even though he will turn 5 before the cutoff established by the school system (The cutoff states that a child must turn 5 years old by a certain day (e.g. September 1st) in order to enter kindergarten that year.). She thinks that he will be better able to benefit from school instruction when he is a year older. And I know that sometimes teachers recommend that young or "immature" children should repeat kindergarten, so that they might be more prepared. Should I consider academically "redshirting" my own son? Would the "gift of time" really help him succeed in school later on? -**Confused in Carolina***
2. *I am CEO of a medium sized company, and seven months pregnant with my first child. My partner and I just finished going to childbirth classes. Several of the other expectant mothers mentioned that they were planning to breastfeed their babies and that breastfed babies are smarter than bottle-fed babies. I was surprised, because my mother always told me that "modern" women don't breastfeed, and it seems like it will be hard to do once I go back to work. Now I am trying to decide whether I should at least try to breastfeed my baby for a while. Will breastfeeding my baby really give her an intellectual advantage? -**Busy in Boise***
3. *I just had twins and find that I am too busy to play and talk with my 18-month-old daughter, Alli, as much as I would like to. So I have started having her watch lots of educational programs and videos on the television. I think Alli can learn a lot from these programs, but my mother-in-law says that Alli is too young for TV and that it is "numbing her mind." In fact, she thinks I should even turn off my favorite soaps and news programs when Alli is playing in the room, even when she isn't watching. Is my mother-in-law correct? Should I try to get my life together and stop exposing Alli to television, or could she be learning something valuable from the tube? -**Worn Out in Washington***
4. *My 5-year-old nephew, Andrew, is a very precocious reader. He has been reading for at least a year, and he hasn't even started kindergarten yet. I have heard that most children are not ready to learn to read before they start elementary school and that it is not a good idea to push very young children. But my brother and sister-in-law say that Andrew "showed signs of being an early reader" and that they just nurtured it. Now that my daughter Ashley is 2.5 years, I am starting to wonder whether she might be similarly precocious. How can I recognize and nurture an early reading ability in my daughter if she has it, and would this mean that she would be an exceptionally bright student as she gets older? -**Precocious in Poughkeepsie***