



# Bright Start

ISSUE 2 - JULY/AUGUST 2008

How to have co-operative children  
**without smacking**

How baby talk  
**BUILDS BRAINS**

**Fun things**  
to do with  
your children

What does my child  
**LEARN** all day?

**GIVEAWAYS  
INSIDE!**



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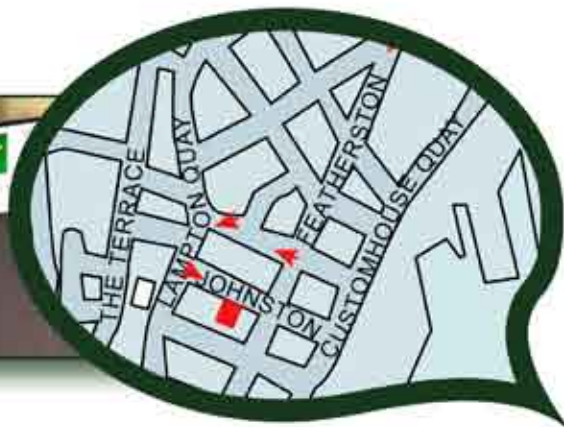
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FROM THE BRIGHT START TEAM

### Introducing contributor, Valerie Davies.

This second issue of Bright Start has the same stimulating mix as the first one, and since I'm delighted to be involved with anything that helps parents.

First, something about the magazine. We have another great piece by Maureen Hawke in her series "Making the Most of Your Baby's Brain Power." This issue it's about hearing and talking and sounds, and though many of us do some or many of the things she suggests, I'm sure not many of us have realised just how important doing these things are.

Also, that though many of Maureen's ideas put into words our instincts, we may not have realised that what we say and do for our pleasure and enjoyment of our baby around sound is quite so relevant to the development, not just of his speech, but his brain too!

Do you sometimes wonder what your child learns each day when you drop him off to his teachers? Well, this issue we tell you what skills those little bodies clustered round the sand-pit are learning, and will give you more information in other issues.

**And now, something about me.** This issue I've written about bringing up your children without tears. I'm a doting grandmother, and have been learning and writing about children for forty years now, both here and in Hong Kong, in newspapers and magazines. Some of the mothers who read this magazine may have mothers who read my columns in Woman's Weekly, and the Auckland Star in the 70's and 80's, and some may have read them in the Kindergarten magazine in the 90's, which my daughter was editing at the time.

Being a grandmother gives one a different perspective on many things, and from watching my own and other grandchildren, I've reached some conclusions about happy families - which may change as I continue growing and changing! I believe that children need firm but gentle parents who are clear about how they want their family to operate, so every-one knows where they are. And I'm sure that children want parents who are kind, who have time for them, and who enjoy them.

In another issue I'll write about why I think children benefit from having grandparents. We all know that grandparents benefit from having grandchildren!

Happy reading,  
Valerie Davies.



Valerie with one of her grandchildren.

#### CONTENTS

- 4 Shorts
- 5 Our people
- 6 How to have co-operative children without smacking
- 10 How baby talk builds brains
- 12 What does my child learn all day?
- 14 Fun things to do with your children



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Kidicorp is New Zealand's largest private early childhood provider. Over 8,000 children are enrolled annually in Kidicorp centres around New Zealand.

Bright Start aims to increase our sense of family amongst our teachers and to better connect us with our parents and their families.

# Shorts

## TOP PARENTING TIP

When you're talking to someone, do you want them to listen to you? That's how your children feel too. If they tug your skirt because you're too busy talking to a friend to listen to them, that hurts. And if they want to tell you something that happened at kindy or school, that's important. They need to know you will hear them.

At an inner city school in Melbourne some years ago, troubled children were allocated someone to talk to after school, while their mothers were still at work. Behavioural problems ceased when the children had the experience of someone listening to them uncritically (no "you should have said this" or "done that" - just listening). That's what we all need, especially our children.

## BEACH HOP 2007

Bears Childcare supports the Whangamata Beach Hop - a huge community event that celebrates classic cars and the Rock'n'Roll times of the 50's and 60's.

This year the centre made up a song and the children went down to the local FM radio station and recorded it and heard it on the radio for the week. The 4's extension group learnt to R'n'R dance and the whole centre dressed up in 50's and 60's clothes and walked around the town stopping to sing and dance.



## Giveaways

### THE PILL - ARE YOU SURE IT'S FOR YOU?

By Jane Bennet and Alexandra Pope

Every woman has had the dilemma of wondering whether the pill is right for them; experimented with the pill; found they have gained weight or got depressed. Now a book has been written by natural fertility specialist and psychotherapist exploring the alternatives to taking the pill. Filled with case studies from real women this book has practical advice for choosing alternatives to the pill and not getting pregnant.



Allen & Unwin, RRP \$29.95.

WE HAVE TWO COPIES TO GIVEAWAY.

### THIS DINOSAUR IS SO BIG

By Nick Sharatt, 2008

Children will have lots of fun with this story about dinosaurs that are so BIG they can eat a bus! With eight giant, indestructible magnetic shapes that children can use to make funny pictures and silly sentences all about really BIG dinosaurs.



12 pages, RRP \$25.00.  
Penguin Group (NZ).

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PO Box 276-177, Manukau City 2104.

## Why education before school counts

After finishing at New Horizons in Takanini, Auckland, Levi Siataga has embraced school with incredible enthusiasm. Two weeks after Levi started school, his teacher gave him a math's worksheet to colour in using some counters. By the time she got back, Levi had completed all 22 exercises of small sums under 10 and got all 22 correct. By the end of term he had received six certificates and one principal's award.

Levi still talks about his childcare centre 'where the babies are now'. "There were no tears on his first day, not a hint of insecurity, he seemed to know what was expected and jumped right in," said his mother.

"What you do at the centre builds such a strong foundation and makes it so easy for a child to ease into life and school work - thank you."



## OUR People



**Kay Debnam is a Business Manager in Wanganui. She has been teaching for many years and was most recently the Centre Manager of three licenses.**

*Q. Tell us a bit about you.*

A. I'm married to Carl and have three children, two at University and one at secondary school. I got involved in ECE through the Playcentre movement when my children were small. It gave me a great grounding in relationships with adults and understanding the management side of early childhood. I realised early on that if I wished to continue in ECE I needed more qualifications so studied extramurally through Massey University. I graduated three years ago and worked part time at Playcentre at the same time.

*Q. Parents are very involved in your centre – how did you make this happen?*

A. I think parents are the first and best teachers of their children and I always remember that when listening to their requests or seeking advice. I am always happy to have a chat with parents. I can empathise with the many challenges parents have. I encourage all our staff to take time to get to know their parents so that they can build strong relationships with them to better understand their child.

*Q. How do you motivate teachers that have spent years in ECE to finish their formal training?*

A. I let them know I was in my 40's when I began studying. There are so many benefits of graduating and so many people to help them through their study, especially in our centres.

*Q. The team spirit at your centre is described as 'awesome' – why do you think this is?*

A. We have passionate teachers working at Happy Days. Each one brings different strengths to the centre and we focus on what we each do well rather than what we can't. We have a very diverse group from 17 to 63 years old. I love the life skills that each person brings to their teaching practice. We learn from each other. Nothing is too much trouble for our team. If they want to achieve something for their children like dress up day, movie day, or concerts we make it happen.

*Q. When you are not working, what do you love to do?*

A. I am a bit of a Trade Me addict – I love bidding on bits and pieces so I always have exciting parcels arriving in the mail!

*Q. Can you share anything that you've developed, supported or encouraged at your centre?*

A. I think my biggest achievement has been to open up communication lines at our three centres. I write a weekly newsletter for all staff to keep them up to date with happenings. I encourage social events that the staff organise. We recently had 20 staff enter the 'Relay for Life' to raise money for cancer treatment – a huge achievement for one centre.

*Q. What have you learned from working at Kidicorp?*

A. We have so many opportunities and anyone can grab and run with them. I came to work for Kidicorp less than two years ago as a teacher in the Toddler Centre. Since then I have got my full teacher registration through the fantastic Advice and Guidance programme Kidicorp offers, become a centre manager for three licenses and more recently been made Business Manager for Wanganui.

I have had great support from Arlene Troy and support from management is just a phone call or email away.



# Parenting without tears

**Having co-operative children without smacking.** By Valerie Davies.

**TO SMACK OR NOT TO SMACK,  
THAT IS THE QUESTION.**

Actually, it's not. The question is, do I want my children to grow up cooperating with me, or do I want to force them to do what I want? Another question is, do I want to punish my children by hurting them when they're naughty, or do I want to teach them to feel responsible for whatever has gone wrong?

Sometimes caring parents feel they need to smack their children because they don't realise that there are other easier ways to restore order when they think things are out of control.

Sometimes, in the press of modern life, trying to get families and toddlers organised

and off to kindy, school and work, it may feel that a smack is the quickest way to cope when things aren't working.

But parenting is about the long haul, and in the long run, it's easier to have helpful, cooperative toddlers and children than resentful or rebellious children who do as they're told because they don't want to be punished. Too strict discipline can also mean crushed or unconfident children.

Many people who were smacked as children say it didn't do them any harm. Others who remember being smacked also remember how they hated it. One of the things about childhood is that we often bury in our memory the really hurtful things, and then later have no idea

how we felt. Psychologists call this denial. So it's not always convincing when adults says smacking did them no harm.

So, how do parents who've brought up their children without smacking do it?

Everyone I talk to does exactly the same. When the children are tiny, a firm no does the trick. But it has to be consistent, so that when the baby, toddler or child hears you say no, they know you mean it, no exceptions. And that's the challenge of parenting. You can't take time off if you're tired or busy, and decide you can't be bothered to enforce it this time. Then the child learns that no is not an absolute, but a moveable feast and you have the problem of the child testing you, pushing to see how far they can go this time.

So, firmly defined boundaries are the framework in which to organise yourself and your child. And as the child grows, obviously, the boundaries stretch too. Clearly marked boundaries, along with a regular routine give a child a sense of security – he knows where he is, and that these are the rules that work or him.

So, training one's child becomes training oneself – which is the real challenge.

The second rule about saying no is to check with yourself that you're being reasonable. Saying no automatically, as many people do, because they've grown up with the word "No" ringing in their ears can start to mean a frustrated, angry toddler or a timid one. Sometimes, no is utterly justified, like, 'No more sweets'; other times, it may be preventing some precious experience, like, playing in the rain. Everything is relative. How much fun do you want your child to have? How much adventure, how many sweets, etc? Do you want a fun-filled, adventurous, courageous child, or a careful, timid or anxious one?

'But I have to smack the child if he disobeys and sticks his finger in the electric plugs,' a mother will say. A toddler is simply obeying his deepest urge when he's doing this: to explore and experiment, and if someone says no, to find out why. So, don't wait for trouble. Don't expose him to danger. Block up the hole with a plug or safety device. Prevention and avoidance are always better than confrontations.

## “Apparently, even adults find too many choices are stressful and children are not mature enough to make endless choices”

The same applies with ultimatums. This must be one of the golden rules of parenting: Never issue an ultimatum. That puts you and the child into a win-or-lose situation.

The bottom line is – do you love your child? If you do, you don't want him to lose or be dominated. Neither do you want to lose or be dominated. But with an ultimatum, someone has to lose.

An ultimatum is a battle of wills. But bringing up a happy, responsible child is not about a battle of wills, it's learning about cooperation and responsibility; and children learn about these things when they experience them. You set up this atmosphere with the very words you use. Instead of telling your youngsters what to do – invite them.

Crunch time is getting off to work and school. So instead of creating hustle and stress which finally ends with a confrontation over sitting in the car-seat or doing up the seat-belts, because by now everyone is so stressed and hurried, use words like: time to go, let's get our bags, lunches etc; let's see who can get into the car first, do up their belts and so on. Make it fun, which makes it easy; and when everyone is safely organised, reward them with a laugh and a hug and kiss, and approval – aren't we all clever to get here so quickly? You get the picture. And everyone parts for the day in good humour.

It's the atmosphere which creates a relaxed, happy family. Notice when you've slipped into a totalitarian mode, bossing and hustling everyone, and notice too how this creates resistance in children and other people. When you try the democratic mode in which the children, however young, feel they have a part to play and are not just parcels to be delivered here or there, with no say in the matter, life gets easier. They feel respected as people in their own right. And if you show respect, they grow up knowing how to show respect – for you, for others and for themselves.

Another golden rule – don't give too many choices. If everyone has the same for breakfast, habitually, it will never cross your children's' minds to argue about what to eat.

Set the tone from the word go. Give them a choice of either this or that, but never the full range of the wardrobe or the pantry. Apparently, even adults find too many choices are stressful and children are not mature enough to make endless choices.

Yet another golden rule- make life a routine... and try to stick to it.

Babies and children can cope with all sorts of other events if they have a regular daily routine that doesn't change, that they can fit in with and cooperate with because it's always happened like that. And make it fun. When I was babysitting a family of six rather sullen children while their parents were moving house, at lunch-time I said what I always said to my two toddlers: "First one to wash their hands gets a hug and a kiss!" To my amazement

this tribe of grumpy children rushed to the bathroom, and tore out to jump into my arms for a hug and kiss – which they all got. It was a vivid lesson to me how children want both fun and affection, and with these two elements an integral part of family life, children are usually "good" and cooperative.

Explaining why you're doing something or require something of children means communication, which is another vital tool in child-rearing without tears and smacks. When you explain, and children

understand, they will usually be helpful. And in this atmosphere you've created of the children knowing that you're a kind and reasonable parent, when you have to insist on something with no argument, or to say no, then you've got a back-log of goodwill from which the children will respond.

If a child has been naughty, often it means he or she is tired and time-out and a snooze in their room is much more constructive than a slap from an irritated parent.



### Terrible Twos

Sometimes this is because the child is growing so fast, he needs extra protein rich food. As we all know, body chemistry affects our mood as much as hunger.

So if you're in a rush at the end of the day picking up children, shopping and hurrying home to get a meal, make sure you have a bottle of water for each child with you – dehydration or simple thirst makes everyone tired and irritable - and maybe a snack; a carrot, an apple, a celery stick or a biscuit (ginger nuts don't crumble) for them to chew.

Don't waste money on fruit drinks, which always have sugar in them and don't really quench thirst. And while you're looking after the children, look after yourself too and have a drink and snack!

Parenting without tears is about being positive – instead of shouting "don't run" by the swimming pool, call "remember to walk". Small children remember the last word you say, so if they hear "don't run" –'run' is what they'll hear. Saying "remember to walk" leaves them with 'walk' in their ears. You've also been positive, not negative, which makes you feel good, and makes them feel good too.

### Positive Parenting

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Be consistent
- Set boundaries
- Make it fun
- Prevent and avoid
- NOT confrontations and ultimatums
- Respect each other
- Not too many choices
- Regular routines
- Communicate
- Be positive not negative (say 'do' and not 'don't')
- Look after yourself as well.

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Making the **most** of your baby's **BRAIN** power

# Stretching the **Brain** with **Real** Baby Talk

Smiling and talking to your baby comes naturally to most of us.



BY MAUREEN HAWKE

Looking into your baby's eyes with a smile on your face, love in your heart and in your eyes is the deepest learning experience for your baby. (It's also relaxing for you - smiling has been proved to improve our health!) Feeling that connection with you your baby will respond as soon as she is able to make her first coo, and learns to move her lips in that first awkward gummy little grin. (And don't believe that old wives tale that it's wind!)

The more you enjoy and inter-act with your baby, the more brain connections she makes and lays the foundations for all her learning.

Maureen Hawke has given us an inspiring list of simple things to do to create a language-enriched environment for your baby, and he/she will soak up all the stimulation you can give him or her.

And the funny thing is, as you do all these little things with your baby, the depths and quality of your love for each other deepens. These things are a little like fertiliser in the garden, the more you apply them, the more you enrich the quality of your relationship with your baby and in doing so you become a richer person yourself. As you do these things with your baby he is drawing greater depths out of you.

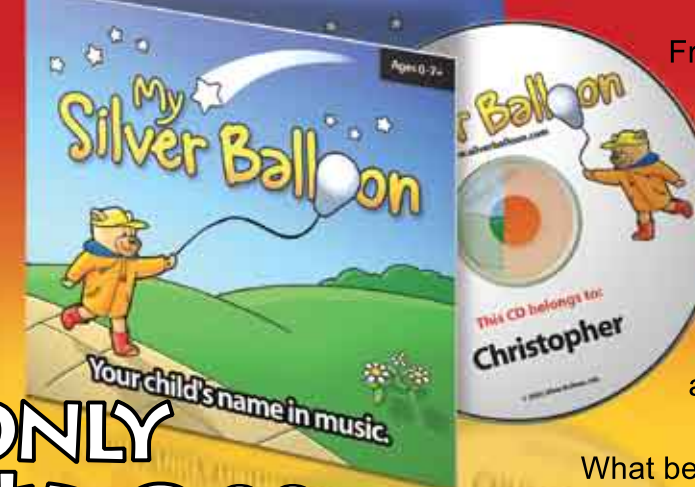
So you and baby are in a win-win situation as you apply Maureen's expert advice.

For more information on how to make the most of your baby's brainpower visit Maureen Hawke's website [www.brightstart.com.au](http://www.brightstart.com.au).

## Creating a language-enriched environment

- Sing and talk constantly to your child.
- Hold and rock when singing to allow body to body transmission of sound through vibration. We feel sounds as well as hear them.
- Repeat rhymes and poems to your baby. These develop listening and expose the child to patterns of speech. Nursery rhymes have a rich phonetic content as well as good rhythm.
- Read to your child at least once a day.
- Talk to your baby constantly. What about? Talk about what you are doing and why you are doing it. However, don't talk baby talk. Use real words –thank you not ta for example. Remember, repetitive language builds that memory bank of sounds and words in the brain.
- Sit as close to baby as possible and make sure your mouth movements can be seen as you talk because speech therapists tell us that sighted children learn to speak more quickly than those who are visually impaired.
- Spend a few minutes every day giving your child simple requests or instructions.
- Try whispering sometimes. When whispering to children for short periods we quickly gain the child's attention and promote their listening ability.
- Remember – unlike things we can see, once a sound has gone, it has gone and needs to be repeated again and again if it is to be remembered.

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# What is my child

# learning all day?

BY LIZ FLETCHER

When you drop your child off at his early childhood centre and watch him dash off to the sand pit or the dough table, do you wonder if he learns anything all day, and will the sand pit and the dough table prepare him for starting school?

The answer is absolutely yes! What looks like child's play is actually the basis for a life-time's learning. This article looks at the various things children do every day, and discusses what these activities teach them.

If they don't learn these things as pre-schoolers, they are actually already behind their age-group when they start school.

## SAND PLAY

Starting with sand play - this is where the development of maths and science concepts start. Children weigh and measure sand and begin to understand volume. As children play alongside their peers they develop relationship skills, taking turns and sharing, as they see something that looks like fun, and want to play with it themselves.

Sand play is where children construct and build with tools and equipment, diggers, buckets, spades, and trucks, experiencing things they've observed or had read to them.

The sand-pit provides satisfaction at all ages, giving children a sense of industry while having fun - remember those elaborate sandcastles on the beach when you were little?

Small children are learning while they're exploring and experimenting with texture, feeling the sand with their feet and hands (hopefully not their tongues), trickling sand over their bodies, learning how to use wet, damp and dry sand. Constructing

and building, using tools and diggers helps to develop hand and eye co-ordination, as does scooping sand, filling containers and tipping out, digging holes, building heaps and castles, tunnels and dams, while decorating with shells and pebbles, and sticks and feathers stimulates their creativity and sense of design.

As they grow older, they begin to grasp scientific concepts like gravity, volume, inter-action of chemicals, and mathematical concepts like volume and weight. And while they're all huddled in the sand and around each other, all those emerging little personalities are learning social skills, sharing, bargaining and team work.

**“Since blocks are mathematical units, while playing, children begin to understand concepts essential to logical thinking”...**

## PLAYING WITH BLOCKS

Block building is an important step in cognitive development, meaning that as children experience the world around them, they form pictures in their minds of what they see. Playing with blocks gives them the opportunity to re-create these pictures in concrete form. To be able to do this is an important step towards abstract thinking.

Block play allows children to reduce the world to a size they can control and gives them a chance to construct and destroy their own work. Since blocks are mathematical units, while playing, children begin to understand concepts essential to logical thinking, increasingly learning to recognise symmetry and patterns in the wider world as they select, build and tidy up the blocks.

Working with these limited materials and within the static confines of the properties of the blocks encourages children to become resourceful and creative problem solvers. These materials help children to make sense of what they know or see of the world as they build farms and castles, bridges and houses, roads and tunnels.

Children also begin to develop an understanding of construction, e.g. design, balance, gravity and geometric shapes. It's also felt that young minds begin to grasp concepts like counting, matching, sorting, grouping, adding, subtracting, dividing, measuring and classifying, that they gain an understanding of sizes, numbers and order, as well as concepts of volume, area, depths, width, height and length.

Wow! You had no idea you'd learned all that stuff yourself when you played with your bricks, did you? And probably neither did you realise that those games you played, imagining people and situations in worlds you'd created, were also developing your ability for dramatic play! So while they're playing what look like games, your children are actually living and learning.

**More on children's learning activities in the next issue.**

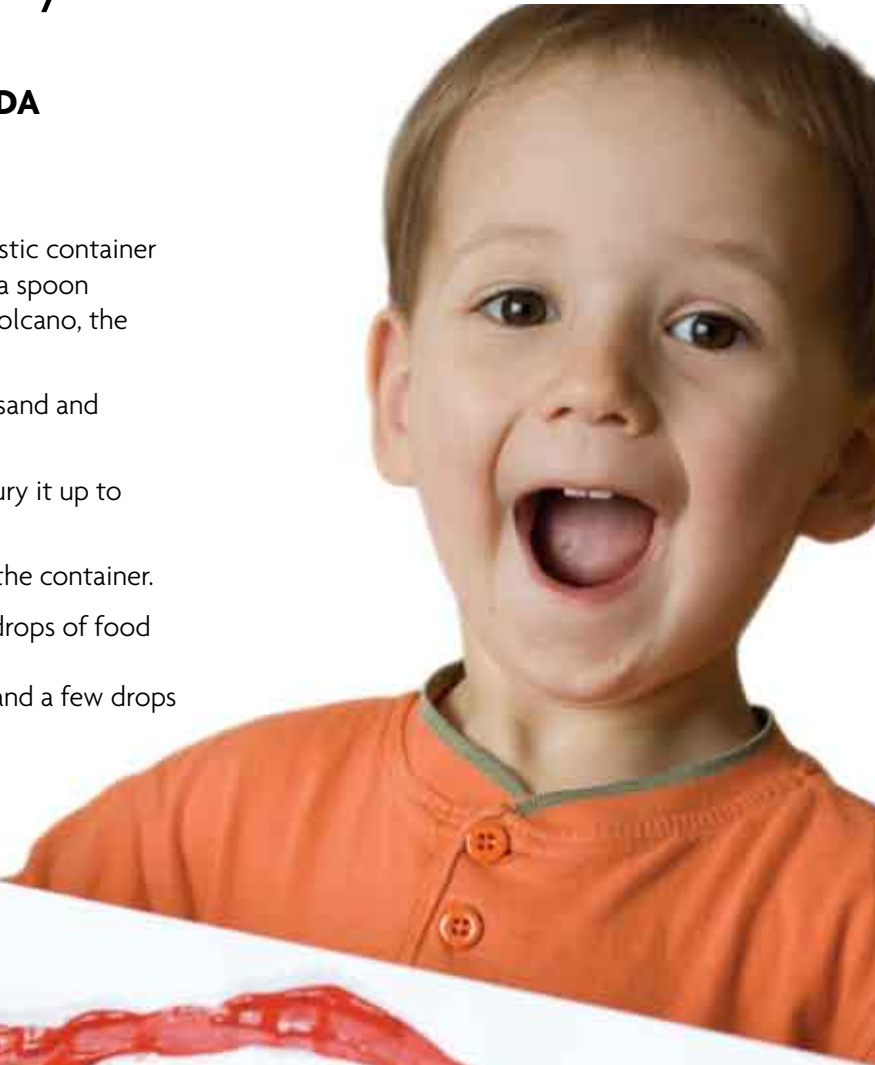
# Fun things to do with your children

## HOW TO BUILD A BAKING SODA VOLCANO

**Gather together:** some damp sand, a plastic container (like a drink bottle), baking soda, vinegar, a spoon and red food colouring. (The bigger the volcano, the greater the quantity of ingredients).

1. Build a volcano like mound out of the sand and make a crater in the top.
2. Place the container in the crater and bury it up to its neck.
3. Put a few teaspoons of baking soda in the container.
4. Fill to the top with vinegar, add a few drops of food colouring, stir briefly and stand back. (Some people like to add warm water and a few drops of detergent here too).
5. Keep topping up the lava flow by adding more vinegar.

**Note:** Children should be supervised by an adult.



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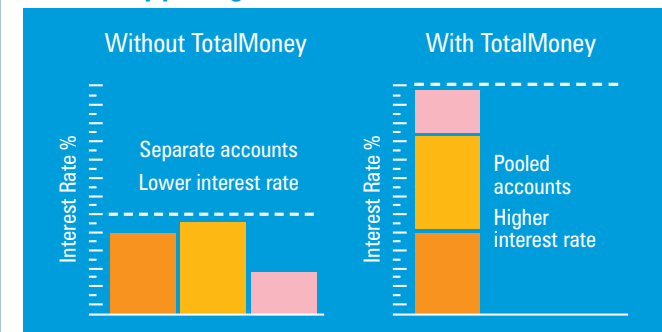


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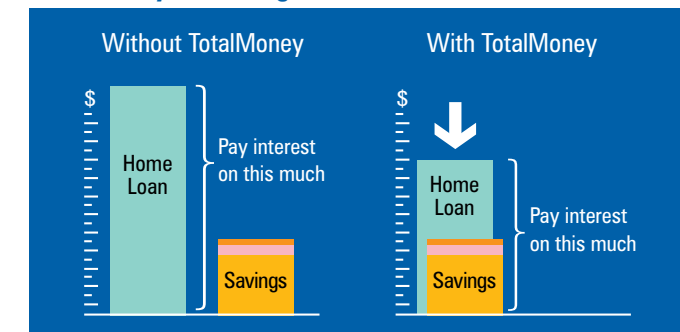


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