

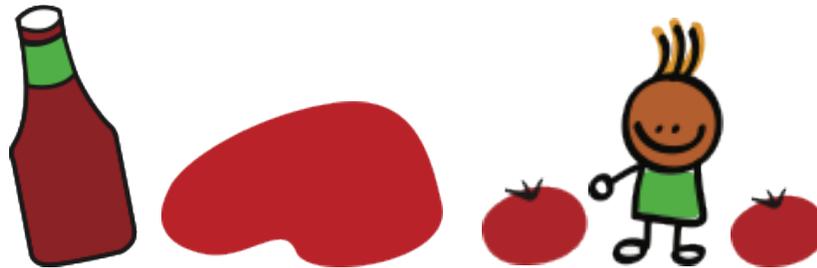
ABCs of Being Smart... K Is for Kindling

By Dr. Joanne Foster



In this column, the 11th in the series “ABCs of Being Smart,” I suggest some ideas (people, places, things) that can be used as kindling to spark creativity, spirit, and skills. I emphasize only **K** words here, to kick-start your thinking, keep going, and create other possibilities.

- **Knowledge**—this is an essential component of creativity, and it’s necessary for intelligence-building. (Knowledge is knowing what bears are, and that they roam in the woods. Being smart is knowing what to do when you’re hiking and you see one!)
- **Kaleidoscope**—is a topsy-turvy, colorful, unusual, interesting conglomeration of designs; a visual stimulus that’s fun to see, manipulate, and create. Experiencing one dimension can be constricting, whereas experiencing many as overlapping and unusual spurs creativity at its finest.
- **Ketchup**—the mundane can be livened up. My 2-year-old granddaughter puts ketchup on practically everything because she thinks it tastes better that way. We all have preferences for making things appealing, more lively, interesting, or fun. What’s your ketchup?



- **Kids**—as adults we sometimes forget that kids have fresh and unique ways of looking at the world, and that we can learn from their perspectives.
- **Kicker**—I took Latin in high school, and every Friday our teacher, Mr. Klemencic (which, coincidentally starts with K), gave us a quiz. He called it a “kicker.” Now, as an educator, I understand that the quiz helped him to know what we knew, what we still needed to learn, and what he should focus on in class during the following week. “*Perfer et obdura; dolar hic tibi proderit olim.*” (Be patient and tough. Some day this pain will be useful to you.) Or, perhaps more to the point, “*Sine labore nihil.*” (Nothing without work.)*

- **Even Keel**—it’s not just about boats. It’s about balance—emotionally and academically—in all areas of life. Kindling your child’s abilities happens best when he has a sense of stability and confidence and the feeling that he can weather any storm.
- **Keen**—this word has many meanings including strong, powerful, sharpened, profound, lively, and eager. Modeling keenness, and encouraging it in children, will take them a long way toward reaching their goals.
- **Kangaroo**—talk about preparedness! This animal has its own built-in “knapsack” to carry its young and keep it from harm. And, it’s a super handy vantage point so a little one can observe its surroundings and learn what to do (and not do) while growing up. Alas, humans don’t have the same facility, but we certainly have devised lots of strategies for safe and supportive child-rearing. Being prepared is essential for parenting—and it’s also a prerequisite for being smart.
- **Kilimanjaro, Tanzania**—in October 2012, I was in a small plane and saw this mountain up close. It broke through the clouds, and it was a beautiful and memorable sight. My daughter’s friend recently climbed more than 19,000 ft. to the peak. She pushed herself to new heights—literally—in so many ways. She saw a lot, learned a great deal, and raised money for charity, too. And, she kindled pride among family and friends. Let’s continue to challenge ourselves and one another.
- **Kick in the But** (with one T)—there are many reasons or excuses not to do something. (“But I was too tired . . . But I forgot . . . But I wasn’t sure how to start . . .”) When this happens to you, give yourself a kick in the but.
- **Knuckle Down**—something to try if you’re having a hard time getting past the buts.
- **Knack**—a knack for something is an ability, talent, or aptitude. What does your child have a knack for? Photography? Calligraphy? Crossword puzzles? And, what is she doing to pursue this interest? Like most everything else, it requires effort if it is to become a real and enduring strength.
- **Keys**—parenting is a multifaceted responsibility. Here are four keys: (a) keep children safe; (b) encourage their interests, strengths, and creativity—and help them find opportunities to pursue them; (c) listen and maintain open channels of communication; and (d) be available to offer support and guidance as needed. What keys unlock the possibilities for your child?
- **Kinesthetic**—refers to strength in movement, bodily motions, and fine motor control. Kinetic energy is the energy of motion—a turning wheel, a pulsating waterfall, a shooting star. Some kids learn best by *doing*, such as participating in physical action. Give kids plenty of opportunities to develop their kinesthetic capacities.
- **Kindness**—Henry James said, “Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.” Perhaps the fourth is to help children appreciate the importance of this, and to encourage them to kindle kindness whenever they can.

Author's Note

Joanne Foster, EdD is co-author (with Dona Matthews) of the award-winning book *Being Smart About Gifted Education* (2009, Great Potential Press), and *Beyond Intelligence: Secrets for Raising Happily Productive Kids* (in press, House of Anansi). She is a parent, teacher, consultant, researcher, and education specialist. Dr. Foster has more than 30 years of experience working in the field of gifted education. She has written extensively about high-level development and has presented on a wide range of topics at conferences and learning venues all across North America. She teaches educational psychology and gifted education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She can be reached at joanne.foster@utoronto.ca or visit her website at www.beyondintelligence.net

* For these and other interesting Latin phrases, see <http://www.latin-phrases.co.uk> and <http://www.latinsayings.info>.