

Yikes, where do I start? How about a quick quiz. First question: What do three doors (bedroom, front and garage), two fishing poles, a CD-Rom drive, two bike helmets, the paint job on a GMC Yukon, a basement window, a kitchen table and a hardwood floor have in common? Answer: They are all among the things that Jefferson damaged or destroyed this year.

Question #2: What do the following statements have in common - 'Apparently that was a song that the other children were familiar with'; 'I imagine President Bush will be impressed when he opens our letter'; 'This pumpkin is just littered with seeds'; 'I wasn't jumping, I was *bouncing*'. Answer: They were all part of the everyday conversations we have with Hannah.

Therein lies the difference between our two children - Jefferson is a physical child and Hannah is a verbal one. And believe me, each has its upside and each has its downside. Jefferson, for example has been chosen by at least one neighbor as the child on the street most likely to have a career as a professional athlete. It is true that he can dribble equally well left-handed and right-handed, even alternating hands. It's also true that he can hit dad's fastball (seriously, the little guy stands in there and nails it, but that may say more about the pathetic state of my fastball than it does about his batting skills). But it is also true that he has been named by the neighbors as 'most likely to make a trip to the emergency room' and 'most likely to need a cast'. Common sense is not his strong suit.



Oh, the ups and downs you get to enjoy with little ones. Are we having fun yet?



Hannah has an extraordinary vocabulary, despite her unique method of listening.

Meanwhile, Hannah can be far too sensible for her own good. The fine distinction between jumping and bouncing was in response to Chris' request that she stop jumping on the bed. Hannah argued that since her feet weren't leaving the bed, technically she was not jumping. Well, technically Hannah, we don't care - get off the bed. There is nothing quite like a four year old lawyer.

Sorry, there's more □

The kids do have some similarities, though. They both learned to love fishing this summer. I thought that was just wonderful, but having two 3-foot tall people flinging 6-foot long fishing poles with hooks on them all about was at times more than we could take (Chris spent much of our vacation indoors, as she couldn't bear to watch). Baiting Jefferson's line, which eventually became a 3-foot pole (see damage above), was much like lighting fireworks - you do it then clear the area. You have a some idea what's going to happen, and you don't want to be anywhere in the vicinity when it does.

They also learned to like Rock and Roll. Now what could be wrong with that? Well, after the 732nd rendition of Elton John's 'Crocodile Rock', I was ready for a return to the 101 Silly Songs tape ('are you kids *sure* you don't want to listen to *Knick-Knack Paddy-whack—pleeeeeease?*')



Cousin Jack demonstrates uncommon bravery as Jefferson (right) wields his mighty rod.

There was one other development that demonstrated the difference between our two children. They both started pre-school and Hannah was having a little trouble adjusting, so the teacher suggested we let her bring her 'baby' (full name Baby Rickie Sally Callie - I told you she was verbal) to class. One of the boys started teasing her about it. As she related the taunting to us, Jefferson jumped up and declared "I'm going to go in your class and fight him up!" Hannah simply replied "Or you could just snuggle me until I feel better."



Jefferson was one of two Buzz Lightyears on the street, but Hannah may have been the nation's only 4 year-old Elton John this past Halloween

Boys and girls. Don't anyone try to tell me they're not different. They have their own ways of responding to everything - and I wouldn't want it any other way. Jefferson, you go ahead and defend your sister. And Hannah, make sure you always hold him close. You'll both be just fine.

Oh, as for the CD, you'll have to read the inside cover to find out what that's all about.

*Merry Christmas, Everyone*

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