

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sample Issue 2021



Also Available in Early Childhood, Middle School and High School Editions

Personalize with Your School Name Here!

Encourage reading by modeling the many reasons to read

Children learn by example. And whatever form your child's classes take this year, the example she will look to most is yours. So when you want to help her learn to value and enjoy reading, modeling the behavior is the best way to get her to follow suit.



Print and send copies home, email it to parents and post it on your website—all for one low price!

To encourage positive reading habits, show your child how you read often to:

- **Learn things.** Say, "I'm trying to learn about a new use at work. This article explains how other businesses
- **Find information.** Do you need to fix an appliance at home? Show your child how you read a manual to learn how. When you want to find a new recipe, show her how you search online or in a cookbook index.
- **Have a good time.** When your child sees you reading for pleasure or to relax, she will realize that reading isn't just for school or work.
- **Pass time when waiting.** Bring something to read everywhere you go. Ignore TV screens in waiting rooms and pull out a book. Play audiobooks in the car on long drives.
- **Connect with others.** When you read something interesting, read a little out loud. Print or cut out an article you think your child would enjoy and leave it on her bed. Show her that reading is something fun to share.



Make it easier for your child to focus

Most students are facing challenging learning conditions this year. This can make it tough to stay focused on schoolwork. But if your child regularly zones out in class, it can affect her ability to learn and retain information.

Studies show that young students who can't focus tend to become older students who can't focus. To help your child strengthen her powers of concentration:

- **Remove distractions.** TVs and other unnecessary devices should be turned off while your child does schoolwork.
- **Allow short breaks.** A five-minute breather can help your child clear her head and refocus.

- **Turn big assignments** into small tasks. If she has to write a report, say "First, think about what you want to say. Next, make an outline. Then start writing."
- **Encourage games** and activities that sustain interest, such as Concentration and puzzles.

Source: A.J. Lundervold and others, "Parent Rated Symptoms of Inattention in Childhood Predict High School Academic Achievement Across Two Culturally and Diagnostically Diverse Samples," *Frontiers in Psychology*, Frontiers Communications.

Also Available in Spanish!

Take stock of your child's school participation

The second half of the school year is under-way, so it's a good time to check on your child's engagement and schoolwork. How many in-person or remote classes has she missed this school year? How many assignments? If you're not sure, contact the school to find out. It's not too late to help your child get back on track for a successful year.

Build positive study habits

Students learn *conscientiousness*—the ability to set and meet goals, think through choices and fulfill responsibilities—over time. When your child does assignments:

- **Remind him** to take his time and work carefully—even when he'd rather be doing something else.
- **Encourage him** to keep trying—even when the going gets tough.
- **Have him double-check** his finished work and confirm his answers are correct.



Source: R. Göllner and others, "Is doing your homework associated with becoming more conscientious?" *Journal of Research in Personality*, Elsevier, Inc.

Adopt a balanced approach

Parents are taking on more teaching this year than ever before, and your support of your child's learning is essential. Turning *everything* you do with your child into a lesson, however, can backfire.

Kids love to do activities with their parents, but not if they feel like they're always in class.



So do some things together just for fun. Let your child try out her own ideas and learn from the results. Enjoying your time together is also an important way to support your child.

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Q&A How can I help my child learn math I never had?

Q: My third-grader has been learning virtually. He's struggling with math, and I don't know how to support him. I never learned the kinds of math he's doing when I was in school. What should I do?

A: The good news is that you can support your son's efforts to learn math! Your real goal is to help your child help himself. If he has a textbook, take a look at it together. Math textbooks usually include a lot more than problems. They offer explanations of how to solve problems. Reread the section that your child is struggling with. Are there sample problems with solutions? Work them through together.

Next, ask your child some questions that may help him get unstuck:

- **What do the directions say?** What words do you not understand?
- **Where do you think** you should begin?
- **What do you already know** that can help you work through the problem? What problems like this have you done before?
- **Would it help to draw** a picture or a diagram?
- **Can we find help** in handouts or videos the teacher has posted?
- **Can you call** a classmate to get help?
- **Have you asked** for help from your teacher?



Parent Quiz

Are you encouraging civil behavior?

Respectful behavior makes cooperation and learning from others easier—in class and in life. Are you teaching your child how to show respect for others, even while disagreeing? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you talk** about the importance of treating others with kindness and honesty?
- ___ **2. Do you model** attentive listening when your child is speaking to you? Do you restate her points to confirm your understanding?
- ___ **3. Do you help** your child find healthy ways to vent anger—and avoid taking frustrations out on others?
- ___ **4. Do you discuss** the need for rules, and enforce consequences fairly and consistently?

- ___ **5. Do you teach** your child to admit mistakes and apologize?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean your child is learning about respect and civility first hand. For each no, try that idea.

"Every action done in company, ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present."

—16th-century French maxim as quoted by George Washington

Ask your child to apply new skills in new ways

Reinforce your child's developing skills by helping him apply them. To reinforce:

- **Reading:** When you read together, encourage him to ask *What, Why* and *What if* questions. "Why do you think Charlotte wanted to help Wilbur?"
- **Math:** Challenge him to catch mistakes. If you count by fives and say "5, 10, 15, 25," can he figure out what's wrong?
- **Science:** Have him think about what he knows. "Look at this leaf. Do you think it's a *monocot* or *dicot*? How can you tell?"

Cultivate inner curiosity

Studies show that kids who are motivated to learn by their own curiosity and interests stay motivated longer and achieve more in school. To nurture this kind of motivation:

- **Help your child** discover her interests. Before she starts a project, have her think about what she wants to learn from it.
- **Ask her to share** what she's learning with you. Show enthusiasm. "What a cool thing to know! Tell me some more!"

Source: L. Campbell, "The Reason Curious Kids Are More Likely to Succeed in School," *Healthline*.

Review your expectations

Research links high parent expectations to high student achievement. To be effective, your expectations also need to be:

- **Appropriate** for your child. Take her age, personality and maturity into account.
- **Clear.** State them in simple terms.
- **Focused** on things that promote school success, such as timeliness and effort.



Source: M. Pinquart and M. Ebeling, "Parental Educational Expectations and Academic Achievement in Children and Adolescents—A Meta-analysis," *Educational Psychology Review*.

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