

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



April 2016

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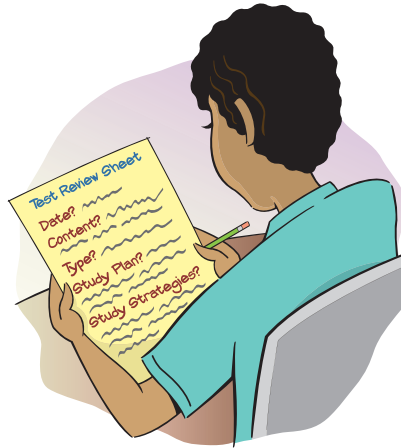
Educational Service Unit 10

A review sheet is an action plan for test preparation success

Elementary school students are learning how to prepare for tests they have to take. But they don't always get it right. Some forget that they have a test coming up. Others study the wrong material.

One way to help your child prepare for tests effectively is to have him create a review sheet as part of his study routine. On it, your child should include:

- **The date of the test.**
- **The content of the test.** Will it cover a specific chapter, a set of vocabulary definitions or a class activity?
- **The type of test.** Will it be a multiple-choice, true/false or an essay test? Knowing the test type will help your child plan how to study. For an essay test, for example, he'll have to know more about a concept than he would if he just had to match a term with a definition.
- **His study plan.** Which days will he study? For how long? He should check the family calendar for conflicts and add his study times to it.
- **His study strategies.** Will he review using a study guide he got in class? Highlight his class notes? Make flash cards? Reread textbook chapters? Prepare sample questions? Study with a buddy? Your child should also be sure to follow any review methods suggested by the teacher.



Link options to outcomes

The best way for students to learn to make good decisions is through practice. Offer your child plenty of choices. Just be sure that all the options are acceptable!

Children don't always connect outcomes with the choices they've made, so help your child think about the consequences of his decisions. If the outcome is negative, ask, "What will you do differently next time?"

Help math facts add up

Math knowledge builds on itself. That's why it's so vital for your child to master basic math skills. To help, you can:



- **Encourage neatness.** Messy writing leads to errors.
- **Promote math fluency.** Make flash cards, and look online at sites such as www.math-play.com for games that let your child practice basic math facts.
- **Show her how to find the answer.** For example, if she doesn't know what 3×5 is, your child can draw three horizontal lines, cross them with five vertical lines and count the intersections.



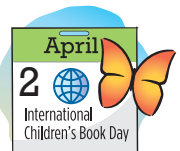
Enhance your child's eagerness to learn

Parents can have a positive effect on their children's desire to learn. To inspire a love of learning in your child:

- **Be a learner yourself.** Let your child see you reading. Watch educational TV programs. Attend school functions. Tackle new projects. Show curiosity.
- **Share what you learn.** Talk about new ideas or scientific discoveries with your child. Discuss things you read and hear.
- **Believe your child can learn.** If you show faith in her abilities, she'll have confidence in them.
- **Show an interest** in what your child is learning. Ask questions simply to learn and have a conversation with your child—not just to quiz or check up on her.
- **Never give up on your child.** If your child struggles in school, stay calm. Help her see that problems can be solved. Figure out what your child can do to improve and how you and the teacher can help.

Spring into April learning

April is full of special days you and your child can celebrate! Put these on the calendar:



- **April 2** is International Children's Book Day. Head to the library and grab some books!
- **April 15** is income tax deadline day. Talk about the purpose of taxes with your child. Practice calculating percentages.
- **April 22** is Earth Day. Think of things your family can do to protect the Earth.
- **April 30** is International Jazz Day. Listen to some jazz with your child and talk about how it makes each of you feel.



How can I help my child control her anger?

Q: My eight-year-old daughter has tantrums when she gets angry or frustrated. She's acting the same way in school, and her teacher has asked for my help in getting her to control herself. What can I do?

A: Elementary-age children have more stress in their lives than most parents realize. When kids don't have the skills to cope with stress, they may resort to toddler-style outbursts. Your daughter's success in school, however, depends on her developing self-control.



To minimize temper tantrums, try to figure out what triggers them. Keep a record of your child's behavior for one week. What happens just before a tantrum begins? Do you notice any patterns? What can you do to help her avoid some of the situations that lead to stress?

Next, help her practice methods to control herself at home. She can:

- **Take a time out.** Have her remove herself from the situation for five minutes. She can return when she can talk calmly.
- **Use calming techniques.** Teach her to breathe deeply while counting slowly to 10. She could also dribble a ball, pat an animal or tell herself, "I can work through this."
- **Throw away the anger.** Have her write or draw her angry feelings on paper, then wad the paper up and toss it away.



Are you really listening to your child?

Strong communication between you and your child will support his school success. You want him to know that he can talk to you about anything. But are you really listening? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you give** your child some undivided attention each day?
2. **Do you avoid** interrupting your child when he is speaking to you?
3. **Do you tell** your child if you are unable to listen to him, and set a time when he can have your full attention?
4. **Do you ask** questions if you don't understand what your child is saying?

5. **Do you rephrase** what your child says to confirm that you understand?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you have strong listening skills. For each *no*, try that idea from the quiz.

"Nothing we do for children is ever wasted."

—Garrison Keillor

Talk with the teacher first

If you have a problem with your child's teacher, the first person you should always talk to is the teacher. To resolve problems:

- **Make an appointment** to talk to the teacher on the phone or in person.
- **Seek the facts.** Talk to your child. But don't draw conclusions until you've also talked to the teacher.
- **Look for sources** of misunderstanding. Is there something the teacher needs to know about your child? Did your child misinterpret something the teacher said?
- **Discuss possible solutions** with the teacher. If you can't agree on one, discuss who you should talk with next.

Source: "When You Disagree with Your Child's Teacher," Care4hire.com, niswc.com/resolvedispute.

You can still help the school

It's not too late to get involved at school this year. When you volunteer, you help the school, improve learning for the students and show your child that education matters. Every parent can get involved. Ask about tasks that can be done at home, at night or on weekends.

Choose encouraging words

Research shows that kids are more motivated by encouragement than praise.

Praise:

- **Focuses on results.** "You got an A!"
- **Uses vague words** like *good* or *great*.
- **Is usually based** on performance.

Encouragement:

- **Focuses on effort** and progress. "You worked really hard on that!"
- **Uses descriptive words.** "Look at your *neat* writing!"
- **Doesn't depend on performance.** "I know you'll try again next week."



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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

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