

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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Educational Service Unit 10

Summer days are ripe for learning

Don't let summer days become just "lazy days" for your child. Avoid allowing your child to spend hours watching TV reruns or playing endless computer games. Instead, promote fun activities that engage his mind and imagination such as:

- **Stock an art activity box.** Fill it with construction paper, colored markers, glue, old magazines, fabric scraps, etc.
- **Use the newspaper.** Find one appropriate article to read together each day. Then find the location of the event covered on a map. Look up new words together. Have your child write about the event in his own words. Save both the original articles and your child's articles in a scrapbook. He can use them when he needs composition topics next year.
- **Read chapter books.** Gather the family each night to read one chapter of a mystery or adventure book. Then encourage your child to write his own mystery.
- **Create a "summer science" lab.** Include a jar for collecting bugs, a microscope, a spiral notebook for recording scientific observations and books about insects, birds and trees.
- **Provide a "drama box" for summer plays.** Put in crazy hats, outfits and props (look for them at yard sales). Ask your "actors" to write and produce a 10-minute play for an after-dinner performance.
- **Play "beat the clock."** Use your kitchen timer. Give your child a page of math problems and see if he can finish them all in the time allotted.



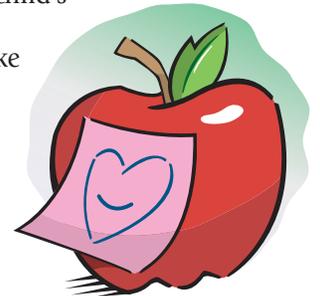
Share these test-prep tips

Successful students study wisely. Give your child a boost by sharing these study tips:

- **Ask** the teacher if you aren't clear about what will be on the test.
- **Review** returned homework.
- **Answer** questions at the end of the chapter.
- **Learn** key vocabulary words. Look in the textbook for words in bold print.

Thank a teacher this month

Teacher Appreciation Week is celebrated in May. With the end of the school year on the horizon, it's a great time to express your thanks. Did your child's teacher offer extra help? Did she make a subject come alive? Did she encourage new friendships? Take a few minutes to write a note expressing your gratitude. Encourage your child to write a quick letter as well!



Read, read, read—all summer long

Research shows that reading skills often slip over the summer. Daily reading can make a difference. To maintain your child's reading skills this summer:

- **Find fun reading spots.** Read at the pool, the beach, the park or the air-conditioned library.
- **Read aloud.** Use funny voices. Memorize silly poems and tongue twisters.
- **Enroll your child** in the summer reading program at your local library. Or start your own family contest to see who can read the most books!
- **Try audio books.** You'll find good choices at the library. These are also great for "No TV" nights. Listen together and then have a family discussion.
- **Keep reading materials** handy. Leave irresistible items around the house, such as comics, kids' magazines and funny joke books. Bring books to pass the time in waiting rooms or the car.

Regular writing keeps your child's skills sharp

Keeping a log this summer is a great way to promote writing skills. Some ideas are:

- **A travel log** with stories about family trips—or just adventures around town.
- **An observation log** recording the phases of the moon, the progress of a garden or even the ants at a picnic.
- **A book log** listing books read, including plot summaries and reader comments and opinions.





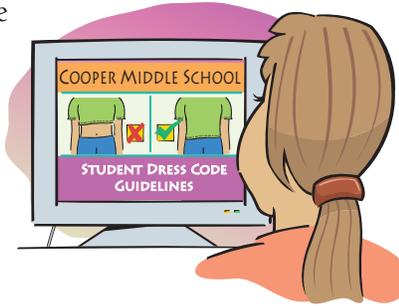
How can parents help kids prepare for middle school?

Q: My daughter is starting middle school next year. What can I do over the summer to help her make the transition?

A: Middle school is a big adjustment for any child. Instead of one teacher, students now have several. Instead of being the oldest in the school, they're the youngest.

It's normal for your daughter to feel anxious. You can help her with these common sources of concern:

- **What to wear.** Check out the school dress code with your daughter. Look at photos of students on the school website.
- **Lockers.** Buy a combination lock and have your child practice opening it. Even if she has to learn a new combination when school starts, she'll feel confident that she can open and close her locker.
- **Making friends.** Remind her that she won't be the only new kid in her school. Everyone will be starting over. Check out school activities. If she can get started on a team (or in the band) over the summer, she'll enter school knowing some other students.
- **Academics.** Find out if there is a summer reading list that will give your daughter a head start on the year ahead. And encourage other reading, too.
- **School supplies.** It may calm your daughter's nerves to be sure she's ready for the first day with what she will need.



How did you do in school this year?

It's time to grade your own school behavior! Children learn best when schools and families work as a team. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you did all you could to support your child in school this year:

- ___ **1. Did you attend** at least one parent-teacher conference this year?
- ___ **2. Did you stay** in touch with your child's teacher?
- ___ **3. Did you help** your child be responsible by setting a regular time for homework?
- ___ **4. Did you talk** about school at home?
- ___ **5. Did you encourage** your child to do his best? (That doesn't always mean getting a perfect score. It just means trying his hardest.)

How did you do? Each yes answer means you've earned an A for this year! If you didn't earn straight A's, use the ideas in the quiz to set some goals for the next school year.

"Parent involvement is key to a child's educational success."

—Warlene Gary,
National PTA

Enjoy math at the market

It's important to include children in daily math activities. Next time you head to the supermarket with your child, use coupons to inspire math problems. "If we use this coupon, will the product cost less than other brands?" "Which of these items is really the best deal per pound?"

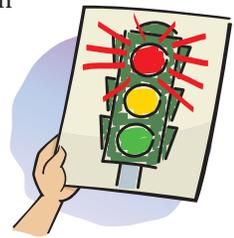
Dinner brings families closer

Experts know that dinner table conversations matter. It's a time when families can connect. So make an effort to have family dinner at least once a week. Ask about your child's day. Tell funny stories. Regular table talk can keep the lines of communication open.

Focus on fitness this month

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month—a perfect opportunity to play tried-and-true games with your child. Try:

- **Red Light, Green Light.** Players start about 15 feet away from one player. That player is a "stoplight." When the "stoplight" says *green*, players move toward her. When the "stoplight" says *red*, she makes sure everyone stops. Any player who moves is out. The first player to reach the stoplight is "stoplight" next.
- **Mother May I?** All players stand the same distance from one player (called "Mother"). "Mother" calls out someone's name with an instruction. ("Jason, take three bunny hops.") The player who is called must say, "Mother may I?" *before* moving. If a player forgets to say that phrase, he returns to the starting point. Whoever touches "Mother" first gets to be "Mother" next, and the game starts over.



Source: "Kids Games," www.gameskidsplay.net.

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