

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



November 2010

Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

Your child's reading skills matter

Good readers are more likely to graduate from high school, get jobs and contribute to their communities. Students who are not strong readers may end up dropping out of school, often leading to problems with the law or becoming parents as teenagers.

You can ensure that your child becomes a good reader. You play an important role in promoting reading success when you:

- **Read with your child every day.** Talk about the story and new vocabulary words.
- **Make sure your child** is in school every day.
- **Educate yourself.** Ask your child's teacher about reading skills for your child's grade level—and whether your child is reading at grade level.
- **Monitor your child's progress.** Look over your child's homework. Ask his teacher how your child is doing.
- **Promote reading for fun.** Visit the library often. Make read-aloud time a regular family activity.
- **Find after-school activities** that promote reading. Limit TV time.
- **Improve your own reading skills.**



Get help if your child is struggling with reading. Start by talking with your child's teacher.

Source: "Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/reports/readingmatters.aspx>.



Help conquer writer's block with a list

Nothing for your child to write about? Use the November theme of giving thanks to motivate her. Here's how:

1. **Brainstorm with your child.** Why is she thankful? Help her make a list of reasons. Then have her choose one topic from the list.
2. **Have her write a sentence** at the top of a sheet of paper. For example, she might write, "I am thankful for my grandfather."
3. **Have her list** the reasons why she is thankful for her grandfather. She may love going fishing with her grandfather. She may

love having her grandfather read to her. Ask her to write more reasons she is thankful for her grandfather.

4. **Help her use her list** to write a paragraph. She now has a topic sentence ("I am thankful for my grandfather.") and supporting details.

Source: Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8*, ISBN: 9781-5711-0706-0, Stenhouse Publishers.

Teach children to persevere

Does your child know the meaning of the word *perseverance*? Take time to define it for your child today. Explain that "not giving up" or "staying with a task" will lead her to success in class and on homework. Then teach your child some phrases to use when the going gets tough:

- "I won't give up."
- "I'll try again."
- "Stick with it."

Keep family traditions alive

Does your family have winter traditions? If so, celebrate them. If not, create them! Traditions give children a sense of stability. Ask your child for ideas. You might:

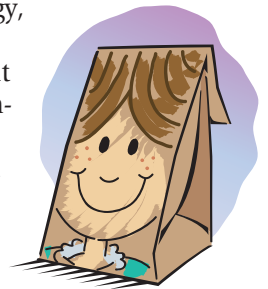
- **Make** holiday decorations.
- **Bake** a special dessert.
- **Do** volunteer work.
- **Write** down wishes for the new year.
- **Tell** a favorite family story.
- **Donate** to a charity.



Creativity spices up lunches

Lunch gives kids energy, and making poor choices—or skipping it entirely—can hurt concentration at school. To help your child eat well at lunch, prepare lunches together.

You and your child can decorate her lunch bag. Try combining ingredients in new ways. Put those sandwich fixings into a tortilla or pita instead. Or use cookie cutters to turn boring slices of bread into fun-shaped sandwiches. Just remember to keep including healthy snacks!





How can parents help their children study for spelling?

Q: My daughter tries really hard, but does poorly on spelling tests. She's frustrated and angry—and I'm stressed out. How can I help her?

A: Brains store memory in two ways:

- **Short-term memory** retains information for only a brief period of time. Your daughter might use short-term memory to remember to turn in a form.
- **Long-term memory** stores information for extended periods of time.

The key for your daughter is to learn how to move spelling words from her short-term memory to her long-term memory. It can be fun if she involves mental pictures. Follow these steps:

1. **Have her look at a spelling word.** For example, the word might be *alligator*.
2. **Ask her to close her eyes** and think about the word. Have her tell you what she thinks about. She might picture an alligator with its mouth wide open.
3. **Have her look at the word again.** She might notice that there are two l's in the word—like the two long jaws of the alligator.
4. **Have her close her eyes again** and picture the correctly spelled word in her mind.



Do you ask your child to be courteous?

Treating people with respect, caring about feelings, and cooperating make it easier for people to live and work together in school and in life. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child learn to be courteous:

- ___ 1. **Does your child know** to say *please* and *thank you*?
- ___ 2. **Are you teaching** your child not to interrupt others when they are talking?
- ___ 3. **Does everyone** in your family—including adults—say "I'm sorry" if they have made a mistake?
- ___ 4. **Does your child know** how to introduce himself to others and shake hands?
- ___ 5. **Do you try** to be a good role model by showing courtesy to others?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are raising a courteous child who will grow up to be a courteous adult. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter which fork you use."

—Emily Post

Do a study-spot evaluation

See how your child feels about his study space. It should be comfortable, well-lit and stocked with necessary supplies. Ask if your child can think of any way to improve his study area.

If you make your child's study spot an attractive (and functional) place to work, he won't mind spending time there!

Have a plan for responding to your child's poor behavior

At some point, your child will probably talk back, refuse to cooperate or show disrespect. (If she *never* does, you're a very lucky parent!) How you react can make a difference. Remember to:

- **Be patient** as you explain rules.
- **Remain calm.** If necessary, say you will talk later.
- **Use routines.** They eliminate the need to negotiate.

Problem-solve with posters

Ask your child to list all the things he can do to find the answer to a math problem. His list could include:

- **Reread** the problem.
- **Restate** the problem in my own words.
- **Draw** a diagram.
- **Guess** an answer and then check it.
- **Think** about how I solved other problems like this one.



Then have him create a colorful poster listing all these strategies. When he's stuck on a math problem, all he needs to do is glance at the poster and try one of the strategies.

Source: Diane L. Ronis, *Brain-compatible Mathematics*, ISBN: 1-41293-938-0, Corwin Press.

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