

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

December 2008

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Writing summaries builds skills

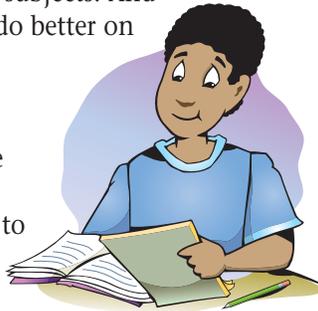
Writing helps students become better readers. Research shows that strong writing skills also help children do better in other subjects. And there's evidence that when kids write often, they do better on all kinds of tests—not just essay tests.

One way to boost writing skills is to write summaries. After your child finishes a reading assignment, compliment him and discuss what he read. Have him write a description of the most important points in his own words. He may need to skim or reread the assignment, and that's okay. The summary should answer these questions:

- **Who** are the characters or people involved? What makes each person stand out?
- **What** do the characters do? Explain the plot.
- **When** did the story happen? Give the time span of the action.
- **Where** did the events take place? Describe the setting in some detail.
- **Why** did things occur as they did? Explain why characters made certain choices.

Writing summaries can change how your child reads. He will start thinking *while* he's reading, and will understand material better. Reading your child's summary is a good way to check his comprehension. It's also a way to enjoy learning together!

Source: Douglas Reeves, *Reason To Write*, ISBN: 0-7432-3045-0 (Kaplan Publishing, Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).



TALKING AND LISTENING

Exhibit good listening skills at home

Children spend more than half their time in school listening to the teacher and other students. Set a good example of listening for your child. Here's how:

- **Pay attention** when your child is speaking. Look at her and not at the TV.
- **Restate what your child has said.** Or ask her to restate what another person has said. This will help your child focus on what the speaker is saying.
- **Don't interrupt.** Don't allow your child to interrupt either. People who are getting ready to interrupt are not listening to what the speaker has to say.
- **Ask questions** of the speaker. Encourage your child to ask polite questions.

Source: "How Can Parents Model Good Listening Skills?" Focus Adolescent Services, www.focusas.com/ListeningSkills.html.

DISCIPLINE

Enforce your consequences

Don't use unrealistic threats ("Slam that door and you'll be grounded for a month,") to discipline your child. If you say something will happen when a rule is broken, then follow through.

If you say "No TV for a week if you don't do your homework"—and your child doesn't do the work—then turn off the TV. Your child will soon learn that you mean what you say.

Source: Nemours Foundation, "Disciplining Your Child," <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/discipline.html>.

AFTER SCHOOL

Set a TV viewing schedule

Teach your child to use the TV guide. Help her make a list of the programs she wants to watch each day.

Turn the set on *only* for those programs. She'll have more time for homework, reading and playing outdoors.

Source: Stacy DeBroff, *The Mom Book Goes to School*, ISBN: 0-743-25754-5 (Free Press, a Simon & Schuster Division, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).



STUDY SKILLS

Get organized for projects

Help your child manage his next big project.

Have him:

- **List** all the steps needed to complete the project.
- **Put** the steps in order. What has to happen first? Next? Set deadlines.
- **Make** two columns on a sheet of paper.
- **Write** the days until the project is due down the left side.
- **Write** the steps of the project in the right column next to their due dates.

Have your child check off each step as he completes it. No more last-minute dioramas!



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What's the 'right' way to help with homework?

Q: Sometimes I feel like I'm the one in fifth grade. Every day I end up doing homework for my daughter. She says, "I can't do this." She asks me to do math problems. How can I get her to do her own work?



A: Your daughter has created an ideal situation—for her. After all, if you're willing to do her homework, why should she do it herself?

Talk about how doing her homework by herself is part of the learning process. Then help her:

- **Plan a homework schedule.** Saying she can't do the work may be her way of procrastinating. Once she has a regular homework time, you may find she can settle down to work without asking so many questions.
- **Create a to-do list.** Checking off completed assignments will be a way to motivate herself.
- **Become more independent.** If she says, "I don't know how to do this," show her how to help herself. Have her read the directions aloud. Then have her repeat them in her own words. Have her review sample math problems in the book before doing the assigned problems.
- **Work with her teacher.** If she is genuinely struggling, her teacher needs to know. Teachers use homework to identify where students need help.

PARENT QUIZ

Do you set aside enough family time?

Between your busy schedule and your child's, it seems like you're always on the go. Yet children need "family time" in their lives. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're carving out enough time for family:

- ___ 1. **Do you eat** at least one meal as a family every week?
- ___ 2. **Do you set** limits on the number of activities your child participates in?
- ___ 3. **Do you keep** a regular bedtime for your child?
- ___ 4. **Do you spend** some one-on-one time with each child weekly?
- ___ 5. **Do you turn** off the TV set occasionally and just spend time together?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are making family time a priority. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"If you can't make a mistake, you can't make anything."
—Marva Collins

Teach about philanthropy

Introduce your child to the "big word" *philanthropy*. It means sharing your time, talent or treasure to help others. Identify volunteers and other people in your community who give. Let your child see you giving and helping. Ask him what charities he'd like to donate to.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Learn about the Bill of Rights with your child

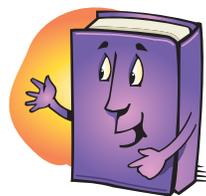
December 15th is the anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the constitution. Help your child find a copy of this important document at the library or online. Look for a version that uses language appropriate for your child's age and reading level. Read and talk about it together.

ENCOURAGING READING

Encourage your child to read aloud with expression

Reading with expression makes reading more fun. To help your child:

- **Read a page of a story** aloud once yourself. Use lots of expression. Then ask your child to read the same page.
- **Attend story hour** at your library. Have fun listening to the librarian read a book aloud. Then help your child to find a book at her level so she can have a story hour for your family at home.
- **Read the comics together.** Use funny voices. Have fun!
- **Use audio books.** Have your child follow along with a print version of the book.



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