

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

May 2009

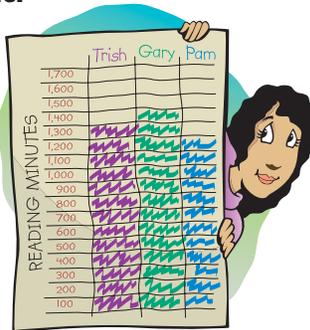
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Can kids avoid the 'summer slide'?

Q: My kids think they can take a vacation from learning during the summer. It's a struggle to get them to read a book or practice math skills. What can I do to help make this summer fun and productive?

A: Summer should be a time when kids can kick back a little. But you're right—they shouldn't take a break from learning. The secret is to plan learning activities that seem more like fun than work. Try:

- **Competition.** It's always a good motivator. Start a family challenge. Who can read the most books—or log the most minutes—this summer? Post a big chart on the refrigerator so everyone can see who's ahead. You might have weekly winners—first prize gets to choose what's for dinner or what book you'll read next for family read-aloud.
- **Day trips.** Start with your local library. Many sponsor summer programs. Check out nearby museums and historical sites.
- **A family project.** Start a garden or a repair job around your home. Let your kids help you figure out where to get the best buys on seeds or paint. Find a way to preserve the fun things your kids do and learn this summer. Make a scrapbook or poster of summer memories.



TESTING TIPS

Ask questions about test scores

You received your child's test scores, but do you know what they mean? To understand the results, ask your child's teacher:

- **Do the scores reflect** what my child has achieved in class? What might have caused the difference?
- **Is my child making** expected progress? If not, why not?
- **Is my child mastering** the skills tested? Does my child need extra help or practice?
- **How will these results** be used? Will my child be considered for special programs? Will my child receive extra help or other special services?
- **What can I do at home?** How can I help reinforce learning at home during the summer months?
- **Do my child's test scores** tell you anything else that I should know?

Source: "Explaining Test Results," Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=1&n=1>.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Guide children who rush through school, homework

Some children do poorly because they rush through their work. If your child rushes:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Ask her how she gets your son to slow down in class.
- **Comment positively** on the papers that show he followed directions and worked carefully.
- **Focus on achievement,** not completion. Tell your child you are proud when he takes his time and does an assignment correctly.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Promote generosity in kids

Teachers appreciate students who are generous. To teach your child about this important trait, help her make a chart with three columns. Then ask her to fill in how she can share her:

- **Possessions.** Could she share a snack with another student?
- **Time.** Could she help the teacher with small chores in the classroom?
- **Talent.** Could she read to a younger child?

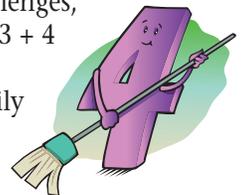


Source: Darlene Mannix, *Character Building Activities for Kids*, ISBN: 0-130-42585-0 (Jossey-Bass, an imprint of John Wiley & Son, 1-800-956-7739, www.josseybass.com).

GROWING UP

Make math part of chores

When your child does chores, he can do math, too. Give him challenges, such as, "Pick up 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 things in your room." Or "Sort the laundry by family members: Dad's, Mom's and yours."



May 2009

SCREEN TIME

Tune in to your child's video games

Sometimes video games feel like a parent's enemy. Children may become so absorbed in them that they ignore parents and reject outdoor activities. While it's important to limit video and computer game time (not to mention TV viewing), you can also make the most of it. You may even have fun and notice its benefits!

To get the ball rolling:

- **Show interest in your child's games.** Talk with him about which ones he likes and why. What skills help him do well in a particular game? What is he learning from games? Does a game ever make him stop and think?
- **Try to understand games.** Watch your child play them. Ask him to teach you how they work. If your child shops for video games, browse with him. The same goes for Internet games. If you allow your child to download one, play it together.
- **Learn about the video game rating system.** Make sure you understand what each rating means and note content warnings, too. Avoid violence or other material inappropriate for your child.



Source: Marc Prensky, "Don't Bother Me Mom—I'm Learning," ISBN: 1-55778-858-8 (Paragon House, 1-800-447-3709, www.paragonhouse.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Is your child ready for next year?

The end of the school year can be nerve-racking for some children. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child prepare to move up to another grade with another teacher:

- ___ **1. Have you told** your child how proud you are of what she's accomplished this year?
- ___ **2. Have you and your child** made a list of classmates whom she'd like to keep in touch with this summer?
- ___ **3. Have you encouraged** your child to write a story or draw a picture about this past year?
- ___ **4. Did you help** your child write a letter to her teacher thanking him for a great year?
- ___ **5. Are you and your child** planning a fun activity for when school lets out for the summer?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child transition at the end of the school year. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about."
—Angela Schwindt

Follow the school dress code

On warm spring days, your child must still wear clothes appropriate for school. Know the school's guidelines for what is permitted. If you and your child argue about what to wear, offer choices the night before. Making a decision before bedtime will eliminate squabbles in the morning.

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Improve listening skills

Do you feel like your child doesn't listen to your directions? Try these tips:

- **Say your child's name** before giving directions.
- **Have your child repeat** your directions in his own words.
- **Teach your child to say, "I don't understand,"** when communication is unclear.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Teach the value of waiting

From instant oatmeal to instant messaging, kids today want things right away. But research shows that kids who learn to "delay gratification" actually get higher grades and cope better with problems.

Try the following waiting activities with your family this summer:

- **Plant** seeds. Later, you'll enjoy beautiful flowers or a yummy food to eat.
- **Give** your kids an allowance. Help them develop savings plans for items they want.
- **Schedule** a fun activity every few weeks. Let your kids help plan what you'll do.



Source: Yuichi Shoda, Walter Mischel, Philip Peake, "Predicting Adolescent Cognitive and Self-Regulatory Competencies From Preschool Delay of Gratification: Identifying Diagnostic Conditions," *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (American Psychological Association, 1-800-374-2721, www.apa.org).

Helping Children Learn[®]

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.
Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Patricia Hodgdon. Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Staff Editors: Erika Beasley & Rebecca Miyares. Writers: Susan O'Brien & Pat Hodgdon. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter. Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García. Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ. Copyright © 2009, The Parent Institute[®], a division of NIS Inc. P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013