

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

November 2008

GETTING ORGANIZED

Time management promotes cooperation and organization

"I don't want to do homework. I want to watch TV!" "My book report is due tomorrow, but I haven't started it." "Stop rushing me! If I miss the bus, you can drive me."

If these complaints sound familiar, try to focus on time management. Help your child:

- **Create routines.** Consistency makes life easier for the whole family. Choose regular times for homework, reading and other responsibilities. Kids who know that studying always comes before TV, for example, may grumble, but they know the rules—and that you're not changing them.
- **Plan ahead.** Big projects take time to finish. Help your child break them into small parts. If she has a book report due in a week, you might pick one part for her to complete each day. (Read the book, make an outline, write a rough draft, edit and write a final copy.)
- **Prepare at night.** Take a few minutes each evening to get ready for the next day. List things that go to school. Books? Check. Homework? Check. Lunch? Check. Library books? Check. Permission slip? Check.

Source: Marilyn E. Gootman, *The Loving Parent's Guide to Discipline*, ISBN: 0-425-17450-6 (Berkley Books, a division of Penguin Putnam, 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinputnam.com).



ENCOURAGING READING

Motivate your reluctant reader

Children who don't want to read are often called *reluctant* readers. If you are concerned about your child's reading skills:

- **Ask for help.** Talk to a librarian or your child's teacher. Ask for a list of high-interest books that are not too hard for your child.
- **Try nonfiction.** Some kids love how-to books. Others love stories about real people.
- **Try a book swap.** Ask his friends to bring over one book they have loved. From these kid-tested books, your child may find one to try.
- **Subscribe** to a kids' magazine that focuses on your child's favorite topic.
- **Try technology.** Check out an audio book from the library. Listen to the first chapter together. Your child may be hooked and want to finish the rest of the book alone.
- **Hang in there.** It may just be a matter of time before your child wants to read.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Three C's build character

Build your child's character day by day. And keep these three C's in mind:

1. **Be consistent.** When you're tired or stressed or in a hurry, you may be tempted to cut corners. Let your child see you making responsible decisions.
2. **Be concrete.** Say, "You were a good citizen when you picked up the trash in the park." "Thanks for being so responsible and walking the dog without being reminded."
3. **Be creative.** Try role-playing a tough situation. "What if the kids are mean to someone on the school yard? Let's act out what you might do."

Source: "Parenting With Character-Building in Mind," Josephson Institute, www.charactercounts.org/parents.htm.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Help at school or at home

November 20th is National Parent Involvement Day. Volunteer to help in your child's classroom. If you work during the day, ask if there's something you can do at home. The teacher will be thrilled, and your child will know you support her education.



BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Have fun with fractions

Help your child understand fractions—right in your kitchen! Take out your measuring cups and spoons. Ask your child to fill the half-cup measure with water, then pour it into the full cup measure. Tell him to do this until the full cup is full. Ask, "How many half cups are in one cup?" You can do the same thing with the one-third and one-fourth cups.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can you help when your child has no friends?

Q: My son's best friend moved away. Now he says he doesn't have any friends. He even says he doesn't want to go to school any more. What can I do to help?

A: School isn't just about academics. Social skills matter, too. Your son's reaction is common. Kids who feel they have no friends don't want to go to school.

Schedule an appointment to talk about this with his teacher. Ask what she has observed in class. Does your son have friends? (Kids have been known to exaggerate.) Does he eat lunch by himself or with other students? Is he excluded from group activities?

Ask the teacher what she can do in the classroom to help your son. How does she usually handle a situation like this? Ask if it might be a good idea for your son to talk with a school counselor.

You can help at home, too. Encourage your son to invite a friend home after school. Suggest a good ice breaker such as a computer game or card game.

Finally, help him find activities he enjoys. Consider an athletic team or scouts. Making friends outside of school may give him the confidence to reach out to new friends at school.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you promoting healthy habits?

The research is clear: healthy, active children are more likely to succeed in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging your child to develop healthy habits that last a lifetime:

- ___ **1. Do you try** to be a good role model with healthy habits?
 - ___ **2. Do you make** sure your child gets exercise by playing active games or taking family walks?
 - ___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to drink water instead of sweetened drinks?
 - ___ **4. Do you eat** dinner together at least once a week? (Research shows kids who have family meals are healthier, happier and earn better grades.)
 - ___ **5. Do you limit** your child's screen time?
- How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child lead a healthy life. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.”
—Joseph Addison

P is for perseverance

Today's children are used to getting things quickly. They pop frozen meals into a microwave and have instant access to the Internet. But most skills can't be learned in an instant. So teach your child a new word—*perseverance*. Tell her that success in school takes time and hard work. It may not be easy, but it's worth the effort.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Exhibit good citizenship

November 4th is Election Day. Talk about the presidential election with your child. If possible, take him to your polling place so he can see how you vote. Teach him that voting is more than just a right—it's a responsibility.

SETTING HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Prepare for report cards

The thought of report cards can make parents almost as nervous as children! Try to think about report card time as a chance to talk about your expectations with your child. When the report card comes home:

- **Read and discuss it with your child.** Even if she didn't do as well as you hoped, look for something positive. Review all of her teacher's comments.
- **Don't lose your temper.** If you can't talk calmly with your child, wait. Then plan together how to bring her grades up.
- **Share your expectations.** Say things like, “I don't expect you always to *be* the best. But I do expect you to always *do* your best.”



Source: “Understanding Report Cards,” Great Schools.net, <http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/showarticle/CA/30/improve>.

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