

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

PS 101 School in the Gardens
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January 2010

ENCOURAGING READING

Make reading resolutions in 2010

Before the silly hats and horns are put away, talk to your child about making a “reading resolution” for the new year. To make reading a priority, plan to:

- **Read with your child every day.** Set aside some time when everybody in the house reads.
- **Read aloud.** Traditional bedtime reading aloud works, but some families take turns reading aloud during breakfast. Decide on a special read-aloud time for your family.
- **Give books** or gift cards to book stores for birthdays and other celebrations.
- **Subscribe** to a children’s magazine.
- **Make weekly trips** to the library.
- **Read newspaper articles** together.



To make sure you can keep your resolutions:

- **Keep reading materials handy.**
- **Limit TV.** You can always record your child’s favorite show.
- **Track your progress.** Help your child mark the calendar every day your family reads aloud. Then reward yourselves. Watch a movie based on a favorite book—or plan a trip to a bookstore.

Source: Elizabeth Knowles, *Boys and Literacy: Practical Strategies for Librarians, Teachers, and Parents*, ISBN: 1-591-58212-1 (Libraries Unlimited, a member of the Greenwood Publishing Group, www.lu.com).

BUILDING RESPECT

Back talk should not be tolerated

Talking back is rude. And responses like, “Yeah, right!” or “You can’t make me!” are disrespectful. If you’re coping with this behavior:

- **Don’t snap back.** Your child may be using back talk to get more attention. It’s better to notice positive behavior.
- **Analyze the communication.** Were you rude to him? Was it the wrong time for that conversation?
- **Don’t get derailed** into a side argument. Acknowledge your child’s feelings, but stick to your initial request. “I know you’d rather play, but you need to do your homework—now.”
- **Teach better ways to speak.** Suggest that he use “I messages” (“I am angry.”) rather than “you messages” (“You’re so mean!”).
- **Promote respect** for teachers. Expect your child to speak respectfully in the classroom, too.

Source: Gary D. McKay and others, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World*, ISBN: 0-7615-2811-3 (Prima Publishing, www.randomhouse.com).

REINFORCING LEARNING

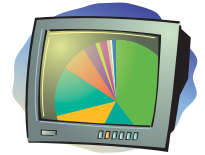
Xs, Os boost spelling skills

The next time your child needs to practice spelling words, play Tic-Tac-Toe! Draw a game board—a grid of 9 squares. Dictate a spelling word, then have your child write it down. If he spells the word correctly, your child gets to place an “X” on the board. If he doesn’t, you get to place an “O” on the board. Play continues until one of you gets “Tic-Tac-Toe”—three Xs or Os in a row (across, up and down or diagonally).

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Leaders of tomorrow need to learn math today

Research shows that strong skills in math prepare students for success in school and the workplace. Show your child that you think math is important. Look for programs about math on TV. Play math games with your child. Have her do math puzzles in the newspaper. Your positive attitude about math will be contagious!



Source: “Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?” ACT, Inc., www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/workready.html.

STUDY SKILLS

Groups promote learning

Study groups can be more valuable than studying alone. Share these study group tips with your child:

- **Find** a few friends who want to work together.
- **Map** out a plan for study sessions.
- **List** important facts that might be on the test and quiz each other.



Source: “Studying in a Group,” Studying for Tests, www.infoplease.com/homework/studyskills4.html #group.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

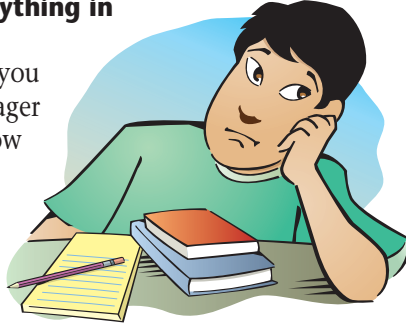
How can parents end whining?

Q: My child whines whenever I say no. We argue about when he should do homework, how long he can talk on the phone what he can wear to school—and everything in between. What can I do?

A: Start dealing with his whining now. If you don't, you will end up with a whiny teenager—and eventually a whiny adult. Here's how to stop this behavior now:

- **Make no mean no.** The surest way to keep your child whining is to give in occasionally. One expert says it turns parents into human slot machines—there's a payoff just often enough to keep the kid pulling the lever.
- **State rules clearly.** January is a good time to revisit and revise. Perhaps you can adjust bedtime or give your child a choice about when to do homework.
- **Be consistent.** Say *no* and state the rule. "No, you may not wear that shirt to school. It doesn't comply with the school dress code. It's not appropriate."
- **Be firm.** If he whines, say the same thing again. Once it's clear that you aren't changing your mind, he will stop.

Believe it or not, kids really want to know where the boundaries are. So set them early—and stick to them firmly.



PARENT QUIZ

Is your child using time wisely?

At this mid-point in the school year, take a few minutes to think about whether you're helping your child use time wisely. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

1. **Have you looked** over the study schedule you and your child set at the start of the school year? (If it isn't working, plan to adjust it this month.)
2. **Do you use** a family calendar to track the dates of tests and big projects?
3. **Does your family try** to keep activities in balance with the rest of your lives?

4. **Do you help** your child break big projects into smaller chunks?
5. **Does your family make** sure there's some time each day for fun or relaxation?

How did you do? Each *yes* means you are helping your child learn to use time wisely. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Time is what prevents everything from happening at once."
—John Archibald Wheeler

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Humor essential at school

A good sense of humor can make school and relationships more rewarding for your child. To help your child develop her humor:

- **Appreciate** your child's attempts at jokes—even when she's not successful.
- **Clip and share** humorous items from newspapers and magazines.
- **Ask your child** goofy questions. "What would you do if you woke up and your hair had turned into cotton candy?"
- **Have "silly meals."** Serve odd dishes, such as "porcupine pears" with licorice sticks poking out.

Source: Raelynne P. and Rachel Rein, *How to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents During the Elementary Years*, ISBN: 0737300884 (McGraw-Hill, www.mcgraw-hill.com).

BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

Build concentration skills

Being able to concentrate can help your child focus on his schoolwork, persevere, and learn more. To increase his concentration skills:

- **Encourage your child** to paint, put together puzzles and do crafts.
- **Play board games**—simple ones at first. Then play games that require more thought, like checkers or chess.

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Relax, enjoy time together

Spending small chunks of time with your child—when you are both relaxed—is very important. You could:

- **Walk** your child to the bus stop each day.
- **Prepare** a meal together.
- **Have** an after-school tea party.
- **Have** regular bedtime chats.



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