

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Torrance Unified School District



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Homework techniques help your child adapt to growing challenges

The content of your child's classes will change a lot as she progresses through elementary school, and the complexity of her homework will increase, too. That means her study skills will also have to change. Instead of learning to read, for example, older students must read to learn. Preparing for tests also becomes tougher. To help your child tackle these challenges:



- **Plan ahead.** When large projects are assigned, divide them into manageable parts. Set deadlines for each part and encourage success step by step.
- **Pay attention to timing.** When does your child focus best? Some kids need to decompress after school. Others prefer to finish homework first.
- **Set the stage.** Pick a quiet, comfortable spot for studying. Stay nearby and make positive comments such as, "You're working so hard! You'll do well on the test!" Research shows positive thinking really works.
- **Practice.** Taking practice tests can build confidence and relieve anxiety. If a test will be timed, for example, use a timer at home, too.
- **Promote health.** Rest and good nutrition are keys to doing well in school.
- **Reassure her** that no matter what happens, you're proud of her efforts!

Source: K. Sunderhaft, "Study Skills for Elementary School Children with ADHD," ADDitude, nswc.com/prepare.



Be a key player on your child's team

Getting involved with your child's education doesn't just feel rewarding. It is rewarding! Small steps, such as reading with your child, promoting good study habits and attending parent-teacher conferences can yield big results.

Parent involvement can raise kids' chances of finishing homework, earning higher grades and graduating from high school. It's important to:

- **Start early—and don't stop.** When parents get involved early on, kids benefit more. And your involvement should continue through middle and high school.
- **Explore options.** Involvement can be as simple as asking, "What

did you learn at school today?" or as complex as running a fundraiser.

- **Be confident.** All parents have valuable contributions to make.
- **Stay motivated.** Involved parents develop good working relationships with teachers. And some are inspired to continue their own educations!

Source: "Involvement Matters: What To Tell Parents," *PTO Today*, nswc.com/involved.

Late again? Try 'beat the clock'



Let's be honest. Some kids have trouble getting out the door in the morning because they dawdle. Practice can help. Try challenging your child to "beat the clock." Say, "It took you 20 minutes to get dressed and ready yesterday. Can you do it in 18 today?" Cheer him on!

Get ready for a productive parent-teacher conference

Conferences are a great chance for you to help the teacher appreciate your child's strengths and address her weaknesses. To make the most of your time together:

- **Prepare.** Ask your child what she likes and dislikes about school. Write down the topics you want to be sure to cover.
- **Be positive.** As you listen to the teacher's views and share your own, focus on working together to help your child.
- **Make plans.** While you and the teacher discuss ways to support your child, jot down things you can do at home. Agree on how and when you'll stay in touch.

Source: "Making Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child," National PTA, nswc.com/confer.

Think first, write later

A blank page can overwhelm an elementary writer. To help your child get started:



- **Brainstorm topics.** If he's writing about a personal experience, for example, ask what's happened lately. He can make a list: a friend's visit; a sprained ankle; the new puppy's arrival.
- **Have him pick a topic** and tell you about it. He could also draw pictures of the action—first, second and third.
- **Ask reporter's questions:** *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*, to remind him of details he needs for his writing.

Source: C. Fuller, *Teaching Your Child to Write*, Berkley Books.



How does a parent decide when 'everybody' is right?

Q: I didn't expect to be facing peer pressure problems until my son was older. But lately, all I hear is, "Everybody's doing it." Sometimes, I feel confident saying no. But at other times I wonder if he really *should* have a few more privileges. How do I decide when it's okay to do what "everybody" is doing?

A: Deciding when to loosen up on the rules is always tough. Do it too early and your child can struggle without boundaries. But there are going to be times when he really is ready for some additional freedom.



Here are some steps to guide you as you make your decision:

- 1. Be sure your rules are reasonable.** It's helpful to talk with other parents. What are they really doing? Children are not always the most accurate reporters of what their friends get to do.
- 2. Think about your child.** Perhaps you have set his bedtime earlier than other kids' because he just needs more sleep. Your family's rules should work for *your* family.
- 3. See if there are some small steps you can take.** Could you invite a child to sleep over before you allow your child to go to a slumber party? Could you let him pick whether to read or do math homework first?



Is your child ready to be a good citizen?

The same qualities that help people live together in families can help them live cooperatively in their communities. Are you teaching your child how to function well in a group? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- 1. Do you talk** about school and family rules with your child and explain why they're important?
- 2. Do you volunteer** as a family on a regular basis?
- 3. Do you show** your child the importance of honoring commitments by keeping the promises *you* make?
- 4. Do you model** good sportsmanship for your child when watching and playing games?
- 5. Do you expect** your child to be responsible for her

actions and hold her accountable for them?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're doing your best to raise a good citizen. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

*"We are apt to forget that children watch examples better than they listen to preaching."
—Roy L. Smith*

Is it time to call the teacher?

Your child fusses that his assignment is "stupid." But how do you know when to contact the teacher? Get in touch if your child:

- **Won't do homework**, even though you've tried your best to motivate him.
- **Finds the work too hard** or too easy.
- **Needs supplies** you can't provide.
- **Doesn't understand homework** instructions, even with your help.

Explain your point of view. Keep an open mind when the teacher responds. List solutions you agree on. Plan to follow up.

Source: "How to Help: Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems," ED.gov, niswc.com/contact.

Measure out math skills

To help your child learn about measurement and estimation, make a game of measuring items in the house.



Ask your child to estimate the number of teaspoons of water needed to fill one cup. Then have her check. Or let her measure her shoe, then estimate how many shoes wide her room is. What would that be in inches?

Source: R. Yablun, *How to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents in Math*, Lowell House.

Put failure in perspective

All children eventually experience failure. The way you—and your child—deal with it can keep him on the road to academic success. Keep these dos and don'ts in mind:

- **Do think about the positives.** Mistakes are opportunities to learn.
- **Do be realistic.** If he's doing his best, don't let him think you're disappointed.
- **Don't argue** with teachers or coaches about grades or decisions.
- **Don't solve** every problem for him.

Source: D. Walsh, *No: Why Kids of All Ages Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, Free Press.

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