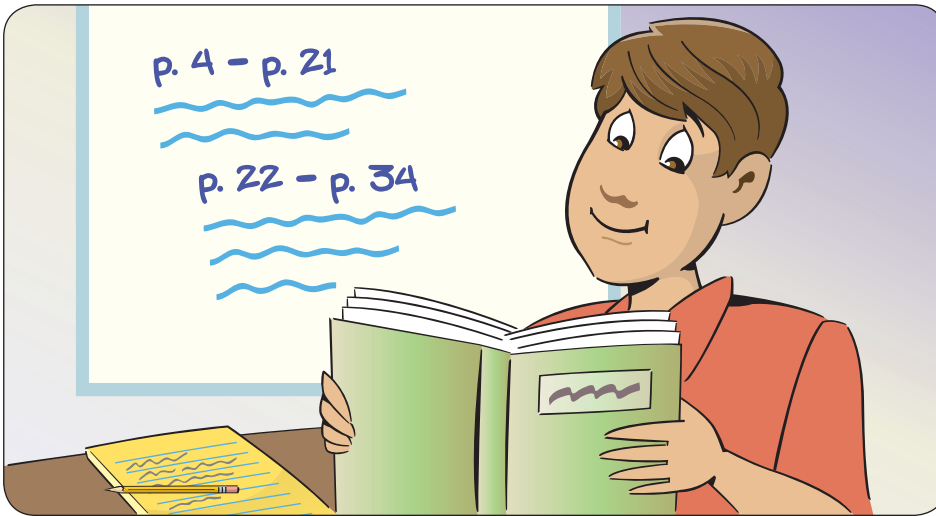


Elementary School Parents[®]

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Portsmouth Public Schools
Simonsdale Elementary

make the difference!



Three simple strategies can boost reading comprehension

As your child gets older, he will be expected to read and understand more complex text. He will transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

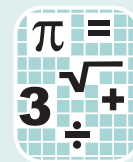
You can help by sharing these three reading comprehension strategies with your child:

- 1. See the big picture.** Before starting to read an assignment, have your child think about what he will be reading. What is the title of the chapter or assignment? Does it offer any clues about the reading? Look for other clues, such as subheadings, words in boldface or italics, pictures or graphs.
- 2. Take notes.** Most good students take notes on what they read. Taking notes while reading will

make it easier for your child to comprehend and remember information. It will also make reading active and engaging. Your child should write down the most important ideas in the reading assignment. He should also write down any words he doesn't know and the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter.

- 3. Make connections.** The best way to remember new information is by relating it to something you have already learned. When your child finishes a reading assignment, have him answer questions such as: *How is this topic similar to something else I have learned? What key ideas did I already know? What new information did I learn?*

Reinforce basic skills with some sidewalk math



Learning math concepts doesn't have to be boring. Activities with sidewalk chalk can

make math fun! Try these:

- **Walk the line.** Help your child draw a number line on the sidewalk. Call out addition and subtraction problems. She can solve them by moving along the number line.
- **Add it up.** Help your child draw a three-by-three-foot grid on the sidewalk. Write a number in each square. Take turns tossing two stones on the grid. Add the numbers on which the stones fall. Do this for five rounds. Add up the five scores to see who got the highest score.
- **Mark your shadows.** Ask your child to stand in the sunlight so she makes a shadow on the sidewalk. Trace where her feet are. Draw a line at the end of her shadow, and write the time of day. Do this every 30 minutes, standing in the same spot. Measure the shadows' changes.

Intrinsic motivation is key to your child's academic success



At one time or another, most parents use rewards to motivate their kids. And there's no question that reward systems work.

But when the rewards stop, the good behavior sometimes stops, too. That's important to remember when it comes to school. Researchers have found that students who are motivated only by the desire to get a good grade rarely do more than the minimum they need to get by.

However, when students are motivated by an inner reward, they are more likely to stick with a task. Students with *intrinsic motivation* learn because they're curious. They retain what they have learned longer, and they earn higher grades.

Here's how to help your child develop intrinsic motivation:

- **Start with his interests.** Before he works on a project, have him think about what he wants to learn.
- **Help him see progress** as he works on a big task.
- **Help your child share** what he's learning.
- **Give positive feedback** and also encourage him to praise himself for a job well done.

Source: "Research Summary: Building Self-Motivation," Education Scotland, <http://tinyurl.com/olzv3on>.

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

—Thomas A. Edison

Teach your child listening skills by setting a good example



Look on any report card and you aren't likely to see a class called "Listening." Yet studies show that students spend between 50 and 75 percent of their class time listening.

Children need to learn listening skills to be successful in school. One of the best ways to teach your child how to listen is by modeling the behavior for her.

Here's how you can model good listening behavior for your child:

- **Accept that you can't fake it.** Your child knows whether you're really paying attention by the way you reply (or don't reply). Put down the phone and turn off the TV.

- **Listen with your eyes** as well as your ears. Look your child in the eyes as you listen.
- **Listen patiently.** All people think faster than they speak. And because children have a smaller vocabulary and less experience expressing themselves, they may take even longer to find the right word. When your child is speaking to you, make her feel like you have all the time in the world.
- **Listen to nonverbal messages.** Tone of voice, facial expression, posture and energy level often say as much as the words your child is speaking.

Source: C. Smith, "How Can Parents Model Good Listening Skills?" Access ERIC.

Are you building a team with your child's school?



Research shows that when home and school form a strong team, kids are the real winners. They learn more and do better in school.

School has been underway for a few months, so it's time to make sure you are doing all you can to build a home-school team. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Have you met** your child's classroom teacher at least once this year?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your child about school each day and review all of the information he brings home?
- ___ **3. Do you monitor** your child's homework? If he struggles with an assignment, do you ask the teacher how you can help at home?
- ___ **4. Do you make sure** your child gets to school on time each day?
- ___ **5. Have you reviewed** the school handbook? Do you expect your child to follow all school rules?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are building a strong home-school team. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Improve behavior at school by promoting discipline at home



Your child's school works to teach students discipline, but educators can't do the job alone.

Parents can help

promote good discipline, too.

Here's what you can do:

- **Change misbehavior** by setting positive goals. Concentrate on what you want your child to do, not what you want him to avoid.
- **Say what you mean** and mean what you say. Be sure you clearly communicate your expectations and limits. If you make a rule, enforce it every time.
- **Involve your child** in solving problems. Family meetings are great for developing cooperation with rules. Kids who have helped

solve a problem are usually more committed to the solution.

- **Keep corrections simple.** Try the "broken record" approach. When correcting your child, move closer to him. Say his name and then repeat the same phrase ("Homework now") over and over again.
- **Impose logical consequences** for misbehavior.
- **Give choices**—but make sure you can live with them. Limited choices work best, especially for younger children.
- **Show your love.** Firm and kind discipline is an act of love, not a substitute for it. Your child needs to know you love him no matter what.

Regular exercise is connected to school success for children



Research shows that physical fitness leads to many benefits for kids.

Regular activity is linked to higher self-esteem and

attentiveness in school. It also lowers the chance of health problems such as type 2 diabetes.

To motivate your child to get—and stay—active:

- **Limit screen time.** When your child watches TV or plays video games, encourage her to take active breaks. Remember that TV, computer and video game use should not exceed two hours a day.
- **Offer suggestions.** When your child has a friend over, suggest they play games that involve movement, such as tag, soccer and jumping rope. Indoors, try

games such as "Simon Says" and "Red Light, Green Light."

- **Plan family outings.** Pick activities your family enjoys and create new healthy traditions. You might go for a walk after dinner or head to a park every Sunday afternoon.
- **Be creative.** You can find lots of ways to sneak in exercise. During chore time, play music or race to finish a job. While doing errands, park away from a store and walk. Or stop at a playground on the way home.
- **Set an example.** If your child sees you staying fit (stretching, biking, walking with a neighbor, etc.), you'll be a good role model.

Source: A. Singh, Ph.D. and others, "Physical Activity and Performance at School," *JAMA Pediatrics*, <http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1107683>.

Q: My daughter is in fourth grade and she is very competitive in sports. Her teacher says that's true in school, too. She rushes through every assignment, hoping to be the first finished. She doesn't worry about little details like neatness or checking her work. I know it hurts her grades. How can I help?

Questions & Answers

A: It sounds like your daughter has a bad case of "hurry-itis." She turns every task into an athletic competition, and she wants to be first across the finish line. (Maybe she's hoping the teacher will run out of work for her to do!)

As you are starting to discover, rushing through assignments will hurt your child's grades. Here's how to help her slow down and get back on track:

- **Talk to her teacher.** Let the teacher know you would like to work together on a plan to help your child focus more on *quality* work, rather than on speedy work.
- **Talk to your child.** Put her competitive nature to work for her. Use a comparison from a sport, such as basketball. Sometimes, it is important to get down the court fast. But when a player is shooting free throws, accuracy is more important. Doing schoolwork is more like shooting free throws.
- **Make a plan.** Tell your child that you're going to look over her homework each night to check her work. If it's not up to standard, tell her you'll ask her to do it over. Soon your child will figure out that when she slows down, she'll get the work right the first time—and that takes less time in long run!

It Matters: Homework

Help your child make the most of homework time



There's no question that students today have more homework than they used to have. And it can be a

challenge to fit homework into busy family schedules.

But homework is a fact of life. Here are ways you can help your child make the most of the time he spends on homework:

- **Help your child**, but don't do the homework for him. Homework is a way to help your child learn to be independent. If you do the work, your child won't learn that lesson.
- **Stay in touch** with the teacher. Be sure to let his teacher know if your child struggles with homework every day. Ask what you can do at home to help your child.
- **Help your child** manage his time. Set a regular time for homework each day. Don't leave homework as the last thing your child does before bed.
- **Help your child** decide which homework is going to be hard and which is likely to be easy. Have him start with the hard tasks. That way, your child will be more alert when he is doing the toughest work.
- **Have your child** read aloud to you every night. As you are reading together, stop and ask questions.
- **Remain positive.** Your attitude will affect your child.

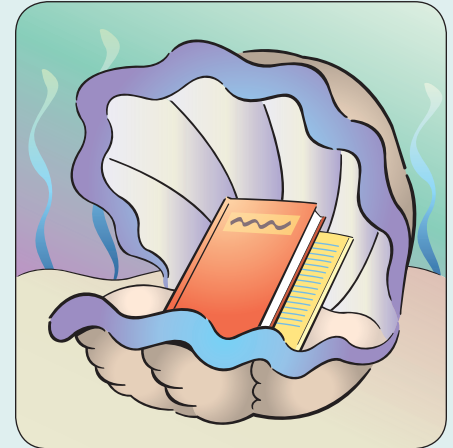
Source: "Homework Tips for Parents," U.S. Department of Education.

Do you know the hidden value of your child's homework?

Homework gives your child an opportunity to practice the skills she is learning in school. But did you realize that it also teaches important life lessons?

When your child completes homework on her own, she learns:

- **Responsibility.** Your child learns the importance of fulfilling her obligations. She also learns to hold herself accountable for her mistakes and successes.
- **Perseverance.** Most parents want to protect their kids from frustration. However, making your child's life easier now will only make it harder in the future.
- **Time management.** Learning how to manage her time in order to get her homework finished is one of the most valuable skills your child can learn.



- **Initiative.** Homework can help your child learn how to be self-motivated. When she chooses to complete spelling assignments a few days before they are due, she is showing initiative.

Source: J. Rosemond, *Ending the Homework Hassle*, Andrews & McMeel Publishing Company.

Your child can use a notebook to track homework assignments



"Do I have math homework? I can't remember!" Sound familiar? If so, teach your child how to use

a homework notebook.

Any small notebook will do. When the teacher gives homework, your child should write down the answers to three questions:

1. **What is the assignment?** Your child should be as specific as possible: Finish math problems 1 through 10, read chapter two of *Charlotte's Web*, complete three spelling word activities.

2. **What do I need to do it?** Your child should list the books and other materials he will need in order to complete the assignments: Take home my spelling list. Bring home some graph paper. Bring home the book, *Charlotte's Web*.

3. **When is it due?** Your child should write down the date each assignment is due. Before your child leaves school each day, he should check his homework notebook.

Source: B. Hoffman, *Successful Homework Habits: A Parent's Guide*, AuthorHouse Publishers.