

# Elementary School Parents®

make the difference!

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## Start the new school year with strategies for academic success

How you start the school year can determine how well the rest of the year will go. Here's how to make sure your child gets off to a great start this year:

- **Review school safety.** Talk to your child about the importance of following school rules. Also talk about ways to be safe when riding the school bus or walking to school.
- **Get to know your child's teacher.** When parents and teachers are on the same team, kids do better in school. Once you've met face to face, you'll find it easier to ask a question or share a concern about your child.
- **Set goals.** Students who do best in school have both short- and long-term goals. Whether it's earning

an A in math or preparing to become a veterinarian, your child needs goals to keep him on the right track.

- **Settle into a routine.** Kids thrive on predictability. So have a regular time for homework. Set—and stick to—a regular bedtime. Plan a morning routine that gets everyone out the door on time.
- **Don't overschedule your child.** Give him time to unwind after school—especially during the first few weeks.
- **Be genuinely interested in your child's schoolwork.** Ask him about school every day.
- **Insist that your child give his best effort in school.** If your child knows that school is important to you, it will be important to him.

### Build the habit of reading aloud together



What's one simple thing you can do to help your child do better in school this year? Read aloud with her often.

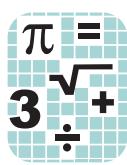
Reading aloud is a way to introduce young children to the world of books. It is also a way to encourage children to make reading a daily habit.

And studies show that even long after children learn to read for themselves, they still enjoy read-aloud time.

Here are some tips to make your read-aloud time at home more successful:

- **Make reading aloud a priority.** Plan for it. Set aside time for it every day, and then just do it.
- **Read books you both enjoy.** There's nothing worse than having 100 pages to go in a book neither of you can stand. If you have any doubt your child will like a book, skim it before you start.
- **Read some books that are a little too hard for your child to read alone.** This is a great way to increase your child's vocabulary.

# Parents play an important role in their children's math success



Research shows that parents' attitudes about math have a lot to do with how well their children do in math. Kids who enjoy math do better in it. Kids whose parents tell them they didn't like math when they were in school, not surprisingly, often have trouble in math.

To help your child develop a positive attitude that will lead to success in math:

- **Be positive.** Let your child know you believe everyone can be successful in math. If you say this often to your child, he'll start to believe it!
- **Avoid stereotypes.** Women can be engineers. Children of all races can be successful in school. In fact, students who are successful in math can go a long way toward

breaking the stereotypes that others may hold.

- **Talk about careers.** Young children may decide that being a Ninja Turtle or a Power Ranger is a great career choice. Expand their horizons. Talk about careers that use math—being a weather forecaster, an airline pilot or an astronaut.
- **Connect math to the real world.** As you and your child go to the store, bank, restaurant, etc., point out ways people use math.

**"Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression."**

—Dr. Haim Ginott

# Are you helping your child learn common courtesy?



Treating others with respect, caring about feelings, and cooperating make it easier for people to live and work together.

Are you encouraging your child to be courteous? Answer yes or no to each question below to find out:

1. **Do you remind your child to say please and thank you?**
2. **Do you teach your child not to interrupt others when they are talking? Do you have a signal that means, "Wait your turn"?**
3. **Does everyone in your family (including parents) say I'm sorry if they have made a mistake?**
4. **Have you taught your child how to act when meeting new people? Does she know how to shake hands and how to introduce herself to others?**
5. **Are you a good role model?** If you show courtesy to others, so will your child.

## How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are raising a courteous and respectful child. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

# Give your elementary schooler the right kind of homework help



Homework is a vital link between home and school. Teachers give homework to help children understand and review class work. Parents find out what their child is studying by being involved in homework.

But being involved does not mean doing your child's homework *for* him. That will give the teacher a false reading of your child's progress. Plus, you'll prevent your child from building confidence in his ability to do the work himself.

Here are ways to help your child do well with homework:

- **Make sure your child** understands assignments. Have him read the directions to you. If he doesn't

read yet and the teacher has sent home instructions, read them to him. Then ask him to explain the assignment in his own words. Ask questions to check understanding.

- **Review homework every day.** Even if you're not home when your child does his homework, always ask to see it. Your interest sends the message that homework is important.
- **Don't let your child** become too frustrated. Let him take a break if you notice he's blocked. Then help him with what is frustrating him.
- **Ask your child** to show you homework that's been corrected by the teacher. Notice where he's having problems and focus your attention on those areas.

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# Establish routines and positive habits for the new school year



It's the beginning of a new school year—the perfect time to set the stage for learning success. To make sure your child shows up at school ready to learn:

- **Get a head start.** Many families find that organizing at night prevents morning "rush hour." You can review school papers, pack and refrigerate lunches, set backpacks by the door and agree on outfits.
- **Establish sleep routines.** Choose reasonable bedtimes so everyone is rested when the alarm clock goes off. Do your best to stick with them.
- **Develop morning habits.** If your child does the same things, in the same order, each morning, it's

less likely that she will forget a step. For example, make bed, get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth and put on shoes.

- **Choose a homework time.** With your child, pick a time when she will have the most energy and motivation to do assignments. Create a quiet study spot, complete with necessary supplies, where she can work at the same time each day.
- **Use organizational tools.** What will help your child stay organized? She might use calendars, to-do lists or a folder system.
- **Set priorities.** Schedule things like schoolwork, family meals and even free time on a calendar. Treat them like appointments. If there are openings, your child can add activities.

## Teach your child how to take responsibility for himself



Elementary-age children are still developing their ability to store information. So they sometimes forget their books, their homework and even their lunches.

It's tempting to keep track of your child's things. But this won't help him in the long run. His success in school will depend on his ability to take responsibility for himself and his belongings.

Doing these things will help him get started:

- **Write down what you expect** your child to do. Post lists of his morning responsibilities, weekly chores, and items he needs for school.

- **Ask your child to check off tasks** when he does them. He can put a question mark next to a task if he needs your help.
- **Help your child figure out** where to store his things when he's not using them.
- **Set a good example.** Know where you put your keys. Check your calendar to prepare for the next day.
- **Show your child how** to keep his own weekly calendar.
- **Let your child experience** the consequences of forgetting. Don't bring his homework to school if he forgets it.
- **Praise your child** when he remembers and does what he's supposed to do.

**Q:** Last school year was quite challenging for my child. When her homework got hard, she refused to do it. When she started a project and it got difficult, she became angry and quit. How can I help her develop the ability to stick with tough tasks this school year?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Children who lack perseverance are often afraid of failure. Rather than risk failing, they will simply give up. Once you understand that fear is likely behind your child's behavior, it should be easier to help her overcome it.

Here's what to do:

- **Help your child see the value** of effort. Say things like, "It's more important to *try* your best than it is to *be* the best."
- **Find examples of people** who try hard and succeed. You might share what Thomas Edison said: "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."
- **Tell your child** that mistakes are really chances to learn. So when she thinks she's made a mistake, help her figure out what she's learned from it.
- **Talk about what you learn** when you make a mistake. Make it clear that everyone makes mistakes.
- **Encourage your child** to keep going when she tries to quit. Make sure you say, "Don't worry about mistakes. Just think about what you can do differently."

Whatever you do, don't step in and do the task for your child. As her confidence grows, you'll find that her ability to persevere will grow right along with it.

# It Matters: The Home-School Team

## Make attending school a priority for your child



Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing that *only you* can do—get him to school every day.

Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can also have a hard time making and keeping friends—especially in elementary school.

How often a child is absent in elementary school sets a pattern for absences in later school years. Lots of absences often lead to students dropping out of school completely.

Let your child and his teacher know that you take attendance seriously:

- Tell your child how important school is. Attending school is his job and it is important that he arrive on time every day.
- Discuss the consequences of missing school: needing to do make-up work, not understanding, missing out on friends.
- Make doctor and other appointments during non-school hours.
- Schedule vacations when school is not in session.
- Only keep your child home from school if he is sick or there is a family emergency.
- Keep track of your child's absences. See if there are any patterns that need to be changed.
- Talk to the teacher if your child regularly doesn't want to go to school.

## Set the stage for a successful partnership early in the year

**W**hen parents and teachers work together, the results can be powerful. Here are four things you should do during the first few weeks of school:

### 1. Meet your child's teacher.

Make plans to go to back-to-school night. If you can't attend, contact the teacher to set up a short meeting to talk.

### 2. Share important information

that can make it easier for teachers to understand your child. Sometimes things that happen at home can affect how children learn. A family move, divorce, and even the birth of a baby, can all leave a child feeling a little off-kilter.



### 3. Find out what's expected.

Ask about homework and other special assignments.

### 4. Plan to volunteer for at least one thing this school year. That way, you'll be making things better for your child—and for all children in the school.

## Busy parents can support learning with simple activities



Family life is so hectic these days that it may seem impossible to be involved in your child's education. But even on your busiest days, there are things you can do to support your child's learning:

- Listen and respond when your child is talking to you.
- Read together.
- Stock your house with books and other reading materials.
- Quiz your child on spelling, math and other facts.
- Share favorite poems and songs with your child.
- Look up words in the dictionary together.

- Talk about the daily news.
- Find places mentioned in the news on a map.
- Review your child's homework.
- Cook together.
- Get organized using a calendar.
- Go to the library together.
- Let your child make choices.
- Keep a puzzle on a table for your child to work on.
- Tell family stories.
- Engage in "word play," riddles and tongue twisters.
- Play board games.
- Limit the amount of TV your child watches.
- Ask your child "What if ..." questions and discuss your conclusions.