

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Help your child learn from mistakes

It has been said that “there are no mistakes, save one: the failure to learn from a mistake.”

Children can learn a lot from mistakes, but they need help with this. You can:

- **Say positive things about mistakes** so your child doesn't fear them. For example, “That's okay. Let's learn from this.”
- **Own up to your mistakes.** Don't blame others, cover up or make excuses for actions. Stay calm and show that you value honesty and responsibility.
- **Thank your child** when he points out mistakes. Mention how you'll fix things. You might say, “You're right. I'm sorry I interrupted you. Next time I'll be patient.”
- **Tell stories about little mistakes** you made as a child. Emphasize that you survived them—and your child will, too.
- **Focus on what your child does right**, not on what he does wrong. When he makes mistakes, avoid angry remarks. Talk about solutions.
- **Remember that making mistakes** (and learning from them) encourages your child to be brave and persistent. When minor problems occur, don't be surprised if he bounces right back!



Source: Cathi Cohen, *Raise Your Child's Social IQ*, ISBN: 0-9660366-8-9 (Advantage Books, 1-888-238-8588, [www.addvance.com](http://www.addvance.com)).

## ENCOURAGING READING

### You can make reading a social activity

In elementary school, many kids get wrapped up in organized activities, such as sports teams and dance classes. Yet free-time reading is also important. It builds reading skills and appreciation for books. To add reading to your child's schedule, try creative ideas such as:

- **Book swaps.** These allow kids to exchange and discuss favorite books.
- **Book clubs.** Some clubs even focus on popular series.
- **Mystery book parties.** Stage a mystery or play Clue®.
- **Write-a-story parties.** Let each child write at least one sentence of the story. Then read it aloud!
- **Play-reading parties.** Give a copy of a short, easy-to-read script to all attendees. Encourage kids to be dramatic and ham it up.

Source: Mary Leonhardt, “Bringing Books to Life,” *Family Fun*, June/July 2000 (Disney Publishing, 1-800-289-4849, [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com)).

## GROWING UP

### Prevent procrastination

By elementary school, children develop good attention spans. But they still need to be encouraged not to quit before reaching goals. To help your child develop an “I can do it” attitude:

- **Comment** on what your child does well.
- **Criticize** nicely, helpfully and rarely.
- **Reassure** your child that she can take a break and try again.
- **Say** that persistence is much more important than perfection.
- **Refuse** to finish the project for your child—no matter how much she whines!

Source: Lisa Galin Asher, “Stick With It!” *Parents Magazine* (Meredith Corporation, 1-800-727-3682, [www.parents.com](http://www.parents.com)).

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### 'Actively' improve family relationships

Some families are like bears in the winter—they hibernate! But being active is a great way to build family relationships. Go sledding, build a snow fort or hike a new path. Ask your child what he'd like to do. Then come home for a special family meal.



## AFTER SCHOOL

### Adjust the idea of 'TV time'

Many parents set limits on “TV time.” But today, parents need to think in terms of “screen time.” Keep track of how much time your child spends watching TV, playing video games and going online. If it's more than ten hours per week, consider making adjustments.



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents help children prevent writer's block?

**Q:** When my child sits down to write a report, she "blanks." How can I help her get started?

**A:** Many kids struggle with writing. They sit and stare at the paper. Their minds freeze—or race so quickly that writing down thoughts seems almost impossible. To replace your child's frustration with hope:

- **Provide a good writing spot.** She should sit somewhere quiet and free of distractions. Keep pens, paper, a dictionary and other writers' tools there.
- **Create momentum.** Encourage your child to write for at least five minutes every day. Say, "Write anything that comes to mind, even silly things."
- **Brainstorm together.** Before your child starts to write, spend some time talking. Ask questions to help her think.
- **Suggest dictation.** Let your child "say" her report. Write or type what she says. Or record it and let her transfer the words to paper.
- **Stay positive.** If your child wants you to check her writing, give plenty of compliments and be gentle about criticism.
- **Be patient.** Remind your child (and yourself) that it takes time and practice to develop strong writing skills.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you showing love to your child?

It's not enough to love children. To do their best, kids need to *know* they're loved. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how you're showing love.

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you compliment** your child's strengths?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you tell** your child how happy you are to see him?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you listen** with interest when your child talks?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you find** loving ways to address problems?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you express** love in many ways, such as through hugs, kindness and the words, "I love you"?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer is a sign of a loving relationship. For each no answer, try to change your answer to yes.

"It is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings."  
— Ann Landers

## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Thinking ahead pays off

Children often forget to think ahead. They run out of time before a project is due. They forget to buy poster board until the stores have closed. To improve preparation, describe a situation that will interest your child. For example, "What if someone gave you \$50, and you spent it right away?" Imagine the results, good and bad. This game will help your child see why planning—and weighing consequences—is important.

Source: Robert Algozzine, *Strategies and Tactics for Effective Instruction*, ISBN: 1-570-35119-8 (Sopris West Publishers, 1-800-547-6747 [www.sopriswest.com](http://www.sopriswest.com)).

## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Boost children's confidence

What do eight- to 17-year-old girls fear more, terrorist attacks or being teased or made fun of? *Being teased or made fun of*, according to a Harris Interactive survey. It helps when children don't focus on popularity, but do things they love instead. That boosts confidence!

Source: Meg Cabot, "How To Be Popular (For the Right Reasons)," *PARADE* Magazine, August 6, 2006 (ParadeNet Inc., [www.parade.com](http://www.parade.com)).

## BUILDING STUDY SKILLS

### Use storyboards as outlines

Does your child dislike outlines? If so, suggest storyboarding. Draw rows of squares on white paper. Then have your child write ideas on sticky notes and place them (in order) on the squares. Have him rearrange the notes as needed. He can add drawings, too, and then use the storyboard as a writing guide.



Source: Janet E. Grant, *The Young Person's Guide to Becoming a Writer*, ISBN: 0-915-79390-3 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-866-703-7322, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

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