

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Sangster ES
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REINFORCING LEARNING

Use walks to learn about science

Sometimes the best way to learn about the world is just to enjoy it. Here are some fun walks you can take with your child to exercise and learn. Ask if she'd like to:

- **Stop, look and listen.** Walk 100 steps. Then stop for 30 seconds. Make a record of everything she sees and hears. Repeat.
- **Match leaves to trees.** Pick up a leaf and challenge your child to find a tree on which it could have grown. Then let her pick a leaf for you.
- **Look around.** Don't always look straight ahead while walking. When it's safe to do so, look down at the ground or above your heads. What does she see? What do you see?
- **Ask questions.** Say what comes to mind about your surroundings. "Do all birds chirp?" "Why do leaves change color in the fall?" You don't have to know the answers. You can look them up later.
- **Be silent.** Spend time talking with your child. Then simply listen to nature. What noises can you identify? Bugs? Animals? Wind rustling leaves?



Source: Susan V. Bosak, *Science Is ...*, ISBN: 0-590-75070-9 (Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1-800-325-6149, www.scholastic.com).

MAKING TIME COUNT

Build your child's sense of community

In the Lakota Sioux language, the word *tiospaye* means "the people with whom one lives." Mary Pipher says children benefit from spending time with their families. She offers suggestions on how you can help:

- **Turn off appliances.** It's hard for parents and children to connect if the TV or computer distracts them.
- **Relate to real people,** not celebrities. Let your child know

that people nearby are willing to help.

- **Attend family reunions.** Show your child that he is part of an extended family.
- **Go outside.** This teaches kids that they are a part of something much larger than themselves.
- **Take action** to make your community a better place. Ask what you can do at your school.

Source: Mary Pipher, *The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families*, ISBN: 0-3454-0603-6 (Ballantine Books, 1-800-726-0600, www.randomhouse.com).

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Keep control of homework

Most kids struggle with homework sometimes. Many problems can be addressed with tried-and-true homework strategies, such as:

- **Use a homework routine.** Your child should study in the same quiet place—at the same time—daily.
- **Monitor homework time.** Stay nearby to supervise, answer questions and compliment work.

Source: Nancy Paulu, "Helping Your Child With Homework," KidSource Online, www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/homework.html.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Reduce stress before school

Is dashing out the door at the last minute part of your child's morning routine? Here are some ways to make getting ready for school easier:

- **Tape a folder** to the refrigerator door. Use it for school papers that need to be signed by parents. You check it at night and have your child check it in the morning.
- **Have your child** pack his backpack each evening and put it by the door.
- **Set the clocks** in your house five minutes fast. Before long, everyone may forget the clocks are "wrong" and be on time—or early!



AFTER SCHOOL

Send your child on a word hunt

Here's a fun way to build language skills. Write down a word. Then have your child use its letters to make new words. (For example, the words *tea* and *ate* are in *trace*.) If your child can't spell yet, have him hunt for letters.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How do teachers get children to behave?

Q: I wish I was better at getting my child to cooperate. How do teachers do it?

A: Teachers have lots of experience, and thankfully they're willing to share their tips. Here are some recommendations from veteran elementary school teachers:

- **Provide meaningful activities.** Keep plenty of books, paper, crayons and toys within your child's reach. Being busy and happy can prevent misbehavior.
- **Establish routines.** This helps your child remember what to do. For example, get dressed, brush teeth and eat breakfast before school.
- **Share your agenda.** Explain what's planned for the day or evening. "After homework, we'll go to the library. Then we'll have dinner with Grandpa." This puts your child in the right mindset.
- **Make smooth transitions.** Don't expect your child to drop everything the minute you ask. Give a five- or 10-minute warning.
- **Use signals.** Touch your child on the shoulder to remind him to pay attention or settle down, for example.



Source: Pamela Kramer, "Teachers' Best Discipline Tricks," *Parents*, October 2002 (Meredith Corporation, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Is reading part of your family routine?

Reading is too important to be left to chance. It needs to be a habit. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your family is reading regularly.

- ___ 1. **Do you have** reading rituals, such as reading every night before bed?
- ___ 2. **Do you keep** books handy—around the house, in the car and even in a purse or backpack?
- ___ 3. **Do you have** a family "library" where you keep favorite books to read again and again?
- ___ 4. **Do you set** a good example by reading often and mentioning that you enjoy it?
- ___ 5. **Do you plan** special reading events, such as a "reading

dinner" or a "stay-up-late-and-read" night?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer shows that reading is a family priority. For each *no* answer, try using that idea from the quiz.

“What do we teach our children? We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. You have the capacity for anything.”
— Pablo Casals

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Plan for parent conferences

Do you have a parent-teacher conference coming up? Make sure you plan ahead. List questions or comments you want to mention. That way, you won't go home wishing you had asked about a key issue. If you do forget something, don't hesitate to contact the teacher later.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Mistakes can teach your child important lessons

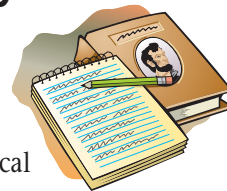
Your child crumples his homework in frustration. He's made another mistake and he's upset. If he's too focused on perfection, reassure him that mistakes are okay. (Everyone makes them!) Say, "I love you no matter what!"

Source: "Helping a Pint-sized Perfectionist," *Child.com*, www.child.com/child/story.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/child/story/data/9years_5.xml&scatref=chd50.

TALKING AND LISTENING

'Interview' important people in history

Make history "come alive" for your child. You can pretend to be a TV reporter, while she plays the role of a historical figure—perhaps someone she's studying in school. Here's how:



- **Before** the "TV interview," have her learn all she can about the person. She might read a biography, for example.
- **Then** ask questions your child is likely to answer, such as, "Mr. Lincoln, what do you think about slavery?"
- **Afterwards**, tell your child how proud you are of her knowledge. Still curious? Do more research together!

Source: Linda Crawford, *Lively Learning*, ISBN: 1-892-98911-5 (Northeast Foundation for Children, 1-800-360-6332, www.responsiveclassroom.org).

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