

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 2025

'Coach' your elementary schooler to a strong school performance

An effective coach is someone who guides, encourages and inspires. When you play this role for your child, you help motivate your elementary schooler to persevere, try new things and find answers.

To be a coach for your child:

- **Serve as a resource.** Completing schoolwork is your child's responsibility. But you can offer encouragement, answer questions and suggest places to look for additional information, such as a website or educational video.
- **Show enthusiasm** for the things your child is learning. Emphasize that knowledge is the goal of education. Also discuss the learning process, which includes hard work, persistence and making steady progress.
- **Encourage investigation.** There may be times when you are not familiar with the material your student is learning. If your child comes to you with a question, it's OK to say, "I never learned that. How could you find out? Let's try looking online or in your book."
- **Recognize your child's strengths** and weaknesses. Some students excel in math, but need help with writing, for example. Support and encourage your child's best effort in every subject, but do not expect the same level of performance in each.



Source: K.T. Alvy, Ph.D., *The Positive Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy and Successful Children, Birth-Adolescence*, Teachers College Press.



Raise your child's awareness of others

An ability to understand other people and think about their feelings will help your child form solid connections with classmates and teachers. This ability also helps students consider situations from other points of view, cooperate and problem-solve—skills that lead to success in school and beyond.

Help your child learn to:

- **Think about what others** might need or want. "It's great that you and your friends like playing tag together every afternoon. But what about the new kids in the neighborhood? How do you think they feel watching you play? Do you think they would like to be included?"
- **Realize that people** may respond differently under similar circumstances. Something that excites your child may make someone else nervous.
- **Respond appropriately.** Your child could return a smile with a smile, listen if the person wants to talk, or suggest an activity to take the person's mind off worries.

Just how long will it take?

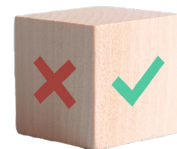
To manage time responsibly, your child needs to understand how much time tasks take to do. Have your child:



1. **Estimate** how many minutes it will take to complete a task.
2. **Track** the time it actually takes to carry out the task.
3. **Compare** the estimate to the real time.
4. **Write down** the task and the time it takes to refer to next time.

Help your child learn from mistakes on graded work

After receiving graded schoolwork back from the teacher, some students never look at it again. But there is still learning to be done! Help your child:



- **Identify and correct** wrong answers.
- **Figure out** what type of errors were made. Most mistakes are due to either carelessness or lack of preparation.
- **Plan changes.** To reduce careless errors, your child could double-check answers before turning them in. If lack of preparation is the problem, your child can ask the teacher questions if the material is confusing and schedule more study time.

Instill positive values

Teaching your child values at home helps create a positive culture at school that improves learning. To get the lessons across:

1. **Discuss the values** that matter to your family—honesty, fairness, diligence, etc.
2. **Set standards** for behavior. Expect your child to tell the truth, to be kind to others and to see tasks through to the end.
3. **Be a role model.** Your child learns to behave by watching you.



How can I convince my child to work more carefully?

Q: My child has a competitive spirit and loves to race. The teacher is seeing this behavior in the classroom, too. Instead of taking time to be neat and accurate, my child is rushing to finish first. What should I do about this?

A: Being first to finish is great on the racetrack, but it isn't what matters when it comes to schoolwork. Students should use all available time to do their best work.



To help your elementary schooler learn to take more care:

- **Team up with the teacher.** Work together on a plan for helping your child focus on improving work quality, rather than speed.
- **Talk with your child.** To appeal to your student's competitive nature, try putting the situation into sports terms. Say that doing schoolwork is like shooting free throws in basketball. It's not how fast the player shoots the ball that matters—it's whether it goes in the basket.
- **Set standards for neatness and accuracy** when your child does schoolwork or other tasks at home. Explain that work that is messy or careless will have to be redone.

Your young racer will soon figure out that slowing down results in higher quality work the first time—which actually saves time in the long run.



Do you know how to address frustration?

Minor hassles and frustrations are part of life. Children need to learn how to handle them and keep moving forward. Are you developing your child's ability to cope with frustration? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you help** your child put feelings into words?
"You sound frustrated that this math is taking longer than you thought."
2. **Do you explain** that with persistent effort, your child can learn almost anything?
3. **Do you brainstorm** with your child about other strategies to try if the first one isn't working?
4. **Do you talk** with your child about successful people who have overcome challenges?

5. **Do you show** confidence in your child's ability to figure out solutions?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child take frustration in stride. For each no, try that idea.

"It's only when I face frustration and use it to fuel my dedication that I feel myself moving forward."
—John Bingham

Celebrate February figures

Many notable people were born in February. Help your child learn more about the lives and contributions of these:

- **Presidents.** George Washington (Feb. 22) and Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12) had profound influence in shaping America. What would your child want to do if president?
- **Heroes.** Rosa Parks (Feb. 4) and Susan B. Anthony (Feb. 15) were champions for rights and equality. Go online together to learn how Parks spurred on the Civil Rights movement and Anthony campaigned for women's right to vote.
- **Artists.** Nina Simone (Feb. 21) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (Feb. 25) made lasting marks on music and art. Listen to Simone's singing and look at Renoir's paintings in a book or online together.

Boost student responsibility

Notebooks left at school. Completed worksheets left at home. To make taking responsibility for schoolwork easier for your child:

- **Talk about ways** to get more organized. Ask your child to make a plan.
- **Have your child try** to make the plan work. If it doesn't, let your student learn from experiencing the consequences.
- **Suggest changes** to the plan, but let your child put them into action.

Foster a 'can do' attitude

Find a can with no sharp edges. Label it *The 'I Can' Can*. Then, every time your child learns something new, write it on a slip of paper. Put it in the can. When your child is feeling low, take the slips out and read them together. Your student will remember, "I can!"



Source: L. Albert, "The Busy Parent's Guide to Involvement in Education," National PTA.

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