

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



May 2025

Boosting reading comprehension helps your child read to learn

As students move up through the elementary school grades, the focus of instruction shifts from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. Your child will be asked to read more complex texts, and to understand and remember the information presented.

To support this step up, help your child get into the habit of using three reading comprehension strategies:

1. Think about the big picture.

Before your child starts to read a passage or chapter, ask some questions to get the thinking ball rolling:

What is the title of the reading? Does it offer any clues about the content? What clues do the subheadings, words in boldface or italics and graphics provide?

2. Take reading notes. Taking notes while reading makes the process more active and engaging. And when students take notes in their own words, they comprehend and retain more. Your child should write down the most important ideas and themes in the assignment, and take note of any unfamiliar words to look up later.

3. Connect new material to familiar ideas. The best way to remember new information is to relate it to something already learned. When your child finishes reading, ask questions such as: *How is this topic similar to something else you know? What key ideas did you already know? What new information did you learn?*



Keep bedtime consistent

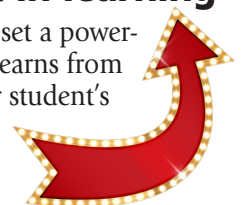
In a recent study of six-year-olds, researchers found that kids who went to sleep at the same time each night had better control over their emotions and behavior during frustrating tasks than kids who went to bed at different times. Set a consistent bedtime that lets your child get 9-11 hours of sleep.

Source: A. Wagner, "Consistent bedtime linked with better child emotion and behavior regulation," ScienceDaily.

Inspire interest in learning

Your words and actions set a powerful example your child learns from every day. To foster your student's desire to learn:

- **Show that you enjoy learning.** Let your child see you reading books and watching educational TV. Attend school functions. Try new things. Look for answers to questions.
- **Share what you learn.** Talk about interesting facts, new ideas or scientific discoveries with your child.
- **Discuss the fact** that most problems can be solved when people work together.
- **Express faith** in your child's ability to learn. Praise effort and persistence.



Practice leads to math mastery

Your child will use the basic math skills learned in elementary school when studying higher level math and throughout life. To provide reinforcement and help your elementary schooler master math:

- **Review math facts** together often, in lots of ways. Make flash cards with facts (3×7 , $11 - 5$, $6 + 8$, etc.). Play games that involve math facts. Have your child eat $3 + 4$ bites of toast. Your child has mastered a math fact when it takes less than three seconds to give the correct answer.
- **Have your child practice** writing numbers neatly. Many math errors are due to messy writing. Using graph paper makes it easier to make the numbers line up.
- **Promote doing a little extra.** If the teacher assigns 10 problems, solving 12 will give your child a little more practice.
- **Encourage mental math.** Challenge your child to solve problems without writing them down or using a calculator.

Try a long-term project tip

Many teachers assign end-of-year projects that students work on over time. The key to success is to break the assignment down into small steps.

Then, to help your child manage the workload without getting overwhelmed at the end, follow this rule of thumb: Move the deadline for completing the project earlier by two days, and set the deadline for each step accordingly. That way, your child will have a cushion if something unexpected happens.





How can I ease my child's middle school anxiety?

Q: My child will be going to a different middle school next year than friends and classmates, and is worried about not knowing anyone. What can I do over the next few months to make this move less stressful?

A: Moving up to middle school involves big changes for all students. They shift from being the highest grade level to being in the lowest. They have different teachers and classrooms for every subject. And many face some sort of social upheaval.



It's natural to be nervous, but your child can adjust. To help:

- **Remind your child** that every new middle schooler will be looking for friends. Discuss the things that make your child a good friend. Mention that it will still be possible to see old friends outside of school.
- **Schedule a tour** of the middle school while classes are still in session, if possible. This will give your child a better idea of what to expect (and even what to wear) on the first day.
- **Arrange for your child to get together** with a current middle schooler who is willing to explain things and answer questions.
- **Find out about school activities** that start over the summer, such as orientation programs, or sports or band practice. Participating will give your child a chance to make friends before school starts.



Are you promoting test preparation?

Going into a test well-prepared increases the likelihood that your child will do well, and there are many ways you can help. Are you making sure your child gets ready for tests? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you put** test dates on your family calendar and avoid scheduling big activities the day before?
2. **Do you help** your child study a little each day for several days, rather than cramming the night before?
3. **Do you insist** on a regular bedtime that allows your child to arrive at school well-rested?
4. **Do you ensure** that your child eats a healthy breakfast and dresses comfortably in layers on test days?

5. **Do you offer** test morning reassurance, "You are prepared, and you will do well?"

How well are you doing?

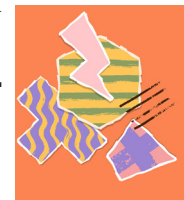
More yes answers mean you are supporting your child's best effort on tests. For each no, try that idea.

"You hit home runs not by chance but by preparation."
—Roger Maris

Enrich idle summer hours

For today's wired students, the lazy days of summer can easily turn into lazy hours of passively staring at digital devices. Provide a healthy balance of active, screen-free activities. Encourage your child to:

- **Star in a show.** Instead of watching a movie, have your child choose an interesting storyline and act it out with friends or puppets.
- **Create a masterpiece.** Gather supplies such as cardboard tubes, colored paper, glue, fabric, yarn and paint. Ask your child to express feelings or ideas through art.
- **Conduct experiments.** Ask the teacher or go online for simple science activities you can do together at home.



Add to the fun of reading

Reading for at least 30 minutes a day over the summer will help maintain the reading progress your child has made this year. To encourage reading enjoyment:

- **Look for books** that feature your child's summer activities—swimming, camp, etc.
- **Suggest rereading** an old favorite, then trying another book by that author.
- **Start your child** on a series of exciting mysteries or thriller books.

Enjoy math games outside

Take math outdoors! With your child, play:

- **Water balloon toss.** With sidewalk chalk, draw a giant target on the driveway or a blacktop. Write a math problem in each circle. Throw water balloons at the problems, and solve each one you hit.
- **Jump rope or hula-hoop.** Have your child count each jump or rotation.
- **Hopscotch.** Have your child jump on odd or even numbers in order.

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