

# Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

April 2023

## A sense of self-respect gives your child a boost in school and life

Children who have self-respect understand that they can learn, and are more motivated to try. They are also more likely to value and respect other people. And they are less likely to be negatively influenced by peer pressure.

To encourage your child's sense of self-respect, foster the elements that contribute to it. These include:

- **Competence.** It feels great to be good at things. Give your child opportunities to learn and practice new skills—everything from reading to playing sports to doing chores.
- **Confidence.** It helps to have family members who stay positive through challenges. Display a “You can do it” attitude. Encourage your child to learn from mistakes and try new strategies.
- **Independence.** Let your child make age-appropriate choices, such as what to wear or when to do a task.
- **Accomplishment.** Notice and compliment your child's effort and progress. “You've read three books this week. I'm impressed!”
- **Acceptance.** Ask about and listen to your child's opinions and beliefs. Show that you appreciate and love your child unconditionally.



## Hearing can affect reading

Research shows that hearing loss is often a factor when children struggle to read. In one study, 25 percent of children who had reading issues showed mild to moderate hearing loss their families were unaware of. If you notice signs of reading difficulties, or a drop in participation at school, have your child's hearing screened by a doctor.



Source: Coventry University, “Screen children with reading difficulties for hearing problems,” ScienceDaily.

## Focus on concentration

Wandering attention makes learning difficult. To improve focus, help your child:

- **Remove distractions.**
- **Break down big assignments** into small parts.
- **Take a five-minute break** after 20 minutes of studying.

## Create a cloud viewer

Have fun learning about different types of clouds. Help your child cut the middle out of a piece of cardboard so it looks like a picture frame. Tape it to a craft stick or ruler.

Go outside and have your child use the viewer to frame individual clouds. Talk about their features. Do they match these types?

- **Cumulus:** Low, puffy and white, like cotton balls. Usually seen on sunny days.
- **Stratus:** Low and gray, covering much of the sky like blankets. May bring rain.
- **Cumulonimbus:** Tall towers with dark bases. Often bring thunderstorms.



Source: “The Types of Clouds and What They Mean,” NASA.



## Act now to make an impact this year

The school year is heading into the home stretch. If you haven't been as involved in your child's education this year as you would have liked, you may be thinking it's too late to start. The truth is, it is *never* too late.

When families and schools team up, the results are clear—academic achievement improves, and so do student attitudes and behavior.

Starting right now, you can:

- **Contact your child's teacher.** Ask, “What are the most important school skills to work on with my child before the end of the year? How can I help my student succeed?”
- **Attend school events** (in person or online), particularly those that involve your child. Participate and connect with staff and other families.
- **Join the parent-teacher group.** If you can't go to meetings, read the minutes to stay informed.
- **Keep talking with your child** about school. Emphasize that your child's education is important.



## How can I teach my child the value of hard work?

**Q:** My fifth grader knew the big science project was due soon, but kept ignoring the deadline to play. Finally, I made my child stay inside the whole weekend to finish the project. How else can I make it clear that work is a necessary part of life?

**A:** School projects aren't just about researching a topic or writing a paper. They're also about teaching kids to focus on a task and follow through.



To help your child grasp this lesson:

- **Share your own experiences.** Did you ever slack off when you were a child? And did it come back to bite you? Tell your child. "I once waited and waited to do a report. I ran out of time to research and write and had to rush and my report was really weak and sloppy. I was embarrassed when I had to present it to the class."
- **Tackle a big project together.** Choose a time-consuming task—such as planting a garden or painting a room. When you finish, talk about how nice it feels to have accomplished the goal. Remind your child that you couldn't have done it without hours of work.
- **Point to role models.** There are lots of books, movies and articles about people who worked hard, stayed in school and achieved their dreams. Ask a librarian to recommend some that might inspire your child.



## Do you aid recovery after letdowns?

A cancelled event, a lost game, a quarrel with a classmate. All students face disappointments in school from time to time. Are you helping your child learn to rise above them? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you discuss** what can and can't be changed? "You can't change the casting, but you can work backstage and be part of the play."
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your child think of positive reactions to unexpected events?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your child to learn from mistakes? "Next time, you can start studying earlier and earn a better grade."
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you allow** your child to express feelings, but not sulk?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you ask** questions to help your child think of next steps?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your child move forward after letdowns. For each no, try that idea.*

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying 'I will try again tomorrow.'"

—Mary Anne Radmacher

## Enjoy silly grammar games

Who says grammar has to be boring? Play these word games with your child to have fun building writing fundamentals:

- 1. Make your own mad libs.** Review the different parts of speech (*noun, verb, adjective, etc.*) with your child. Then write a story with missing words. For example, "The cat climbed on the \_\_\_ (*noun*). Take turns filling in the blanks. Silly words add to the fun.
- 2. Play with punctuation.** Write a short story without punctuation. Can your child read it aloud? Can you? It's challenging! Then edit the story together, adding punctuation that makes it easy (or funny) to read. Then it's your child's turn to write a story for you to punctuate.

## Discuss why we need rules

It's easier for children to follow rules when they understand why they are necessary. Ask your child to imagine a world without rules. What would happen if stealing was OK, if people could drive on whichever side of the road they wanted, if children never had to go to bed?

When you make rules at home, explain the reasons for them. When your child obeys, be specific in your praise: "Thanks for getting up on time. Now we can eat a relaxed breakfast together."



## Social skills are school skills

Cooperation is important in school, and social problems can interfere with learning. To reinforce your child's social skills:

- **Role-play interactions** together.
- **Read stories** about friendship.
- **Be a role model.** Let your child see you cooperating and being a good friend.
- **Find opportunities** for your child to spend time with other kids.

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