Elementary School
# Parents
make the difference!
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## Parents can instill a positive attitude about math & science

Take a look at any list of high-paying jobs and you are likely to see that most have one thing in common: They require a knowledge of math and science. So why don't more students—especially girls—prepare for careers by studying math and science?

Researchers took a look at how parents influence their kid's views on math and science. The study found that, in general, parents are more likely to encourage boys to take an interest in math and science. And this tends to start as early as preschool, when students' attitudes toward math and science begin to form. As a result, girls tend to lose interest in these subjects by high school.

So what can parents do to make sure their sons *and* daughters stay interested in math and science? Here are some suggestions:

- **Have some fun with the subjects.** Conduct simple science experiments in the kitchen. See who can add the numbers on a nearby license plate fastest.
- **Find role models.** Look for shows or news stories featuring diverse people who are doctors, engineers and scientists.
- **Help your child see herself** as someone who is good in math and science. Teach her that brains, like muscles, get stronger with practice. Remind her that "smart is something you *get*, not something you *are*."

**Source:** S. Zielinski, "Adults can sabotage a student's path in science or math," *Science News for Students*, Society for Science and the Public.

## Encourage your child to give thoughtful gifts



Many people exchange gifts over the winter holiday season. While children love receiving gifts, they also enjoy giving them.

Does your child know that the most meaningful gifts don't have to cost money? They simply take time and come straight from the heart. Your child could:

- **Record himself** reading a book for a younger sibling to listen to while reading.
- **Frame a list,** such as "My 10 Best Memories With Grandpa."
- **Play a favorite game** with a family member or a neighbor who is homebound.
- **Record an audio** or video message for a loved one who lives far away.
- **Create a music playlist** with his favorite songs to share.
- **Bake cookies** and deliver them to someone who may not receive many homemade gifts.
- **Create a calendar** for 2022 and decorate it with personalized artwork.
- **Make a gift certificate** good for two hours of household help.
- **Create a beautiful picture** or poem about a special person.

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# Midyear is the perfect time to review your child's attendance



The halfway point of the school year is approaching. It's time for a mid-year checkup on your child's attendance.

It's no surprise that student absences have increased since the pandemic. However, when students miss too much school they are at risk academically. Here's what researchers have found:

- **School absences add up.** When students aren't in class, they miss out on valuable learning.
- **Missing school** becomes a habit. Students who miss a lot of school in kindergarten are still frequently absent in fifth grade.
- **There is a clear relationship** between early attendance and later achievement. Kids who attend classes regularly in the early grades are still doing well in secondary school—and they are more likely to graduate from high school.

How many days of school has your child missed this year? If you're unsure, contact the school to find out. It's not too late to get back on track so he can have a successful school year—and school career.

**Source:** "Attendance Awareness Campaign 2021," Attendance Works.

> **"Students are at academic risk if they miss 10 percent or more of the school year, or about 18 days a year."**
>
> *—Attendance Works*

# Keep your elementary schooler motivated with these strategies



You don't just want your child to learn. You want your child to *want* to learn! Motivation is part of being a successful student.

Here are strategies that can motivate your child to do his best:

- **Stay engaged.** When parents are involved in education, kids do better in school. Talk about school, monitor study time and communicate with the teacher regularly.
- **Have a positive attitude.** Let your child know you believe he can succeed in school. And if he struggles, work with the teacher to find solutions.
- **Promote independence.** Give your child age-appropriate freedoms. Let him choose between two places to study, or whether to do homework before or after dinner, for example.
- **Correct mistakes** in a positive way. Don't say, "You seem to struggle with spelling." Try, "You spelled everything right except these two words! I bet you can learn them with practice."
- **Give specific compliments.** Don't say, "I like your handwriting." It's better to say, "Your report is written so neatly. I can tell that you really took your time."
- **Add more to learning.** Let school lessons spark *your* imagination. Visit educational websites with your child. Take a trip to the state capital, plant a window garden or calculate distances between points on map together.

# Are you teaching and practicing listening skills?



The most important part of communication isn't talking—it's *listening*. And listening skills are crucial for your child's success in school.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are showing your child how to become a good listener:

___**1. Do you try to give** your child your undivided attention when she's talking? If you're busy, say, "I'd love to talk about this after I cook dinner."

___**2. Are you patient** when you listen? Sometimes, it may take a while for your child to actually say what she wants to say.

___**3. Do you avoid interrupting** your child when she is talking and ask her not to interrupt you?

___**4. Do you "listen"** to your child's behavior? A child who is acting up is communicating a need.

___**5. Do you avoid chiming in** with the "right" answer? Instead, listen as she thinks through what to do.

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're teaching your child how to listen. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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# A five-step process can help your child make better decisions



Want your child to make more responsible decisions? Encourage her to rely on this five-step process whenever she's faced with a dilemma:

1. **Assess the situation.** Your child can't make a wise decision if the issue at hand seems murky. So remind her to clearly define it by asking herself, "What's the main thing I'm concerned about?"
2. **Explore her options.** What are some ways your child could handle the problem? Have her make a mental list, then narrow it down to the three most sensible choices. This list-making step is critical because it illustrates that there are usually several options for solving a problem.
3. **Consider the disadvantages.** Have your child think about the cons of each of her top three ideas. If a certain option has a particularly negative consequence, this is a good time to rule out that option.
4. **Consider the advantages.** Now ask your child to figure out the pros of her top choices. Does one option have major advantages over others? Then that may be the winner.
5. **Decide on a solution.** Now that she's weighed the pros and cons of each possible option, your child can make her decision with confidence.

# Boost reading comprehension and writing skills with summaries



Elementary school assignments often involve reading something—a passage on a worksheet or a few pages in a library book. One way to make sure your child understands what she has read is to have her write a summary.

One night, after your child has finished her reading, tell her you'd like to find out what it was about and what she learned. Ask her to write down the most important points in her own words.

Your child may need to go back and read the material again. When she knows she has to write about it, she'll read more carefully. She'll think more as she reads.

After your child writes her summary, give her this set of questions to help her write more complete summaries in the future:

- **Who** are the characters or people involved? Suggest that she write about each person and what's important about each one.
- **What** did the characters do? Your child should write down the plot in her own words.
- **Where** did the story take place? Have your child describe the setting in some detail.
- **When** did the events take place? Your child should give the time span of the action.
- **Why** did things occur as they did? Have her explain why the characters behaved the way they did.

Once your child gets the hang of writing summaries after reading school material, she will soon reap the benefits. Not only will she have a much better understanding of what she reads, she will improve her writing skills as well!

**Q: My fifth-grade son is doing well in school, but he is driving me crazy at home. He zones out when I'm speaking to him and seems to take great pleasure in annoying me. Why is he trying so hard to upset me?**

## Questions & Answers

**A:** It's great that your child is doing well in school. But home environment plays a big role in academic success, so it's important to deal with his frustrating behavior in positive ways.

As difficult as it might be to believe, there's a good chance your child isn't trying to upset you. In fact, it's possible his behavior isn't about you at all.

Some psychologists believe there are two kinds of parents:

1. **Positive thinkers**. These parents feel their children are basically good. When their kids "zone out," they chalk it up to distraction, not misbehavior. Positive thinkers are also likely to be calm when faced with annoying behavior.
2. **Negative thinkers**. These parents see their children's frustrating behavior as disrespectful. Worse, they believe it's targeted at them, so they're likely to react angrily.

Which kind of parent are you? If you see *every* instance of annoying behavior as a direct insult, you're likely to be angry and to assume your child is trying to upset you.

Instead, try not to take your child's behavior so personally. Acknowledge that many unwanted behaviors are normal for kids this age. Remain calm, share a laugh and ignore those eye rolls and bored looks.

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# It Matters: Homework & Study Skills

## Preparation is key to your child's test success



Your child's teacher announces there will be a test next week. "Please start preparing now," she tells students. What steps should your child follow?

To help your student do her best:

- **Clarify what will be tested.** Have your child check with the teacher to find out what the test will cover. She should also ask what kind of test it will be (fill in the blanks, multiple choice, etc.).
- **Make a plan.** Studying works best when it's done repeatedly over time—not at the last minute. Help your child schedule several study sessions and write them on the calendar.
- **Think of ways** to reinforce the material. Your child could make flash cards or take a practice test. You could quiz each other on the material.
- **Encourage good habits.** In addition to completing assignments and studying, your child needs rest and good nutrition to do her best in school. A regular bedtime and healthy meals go a long way!
- **Make attendance a priority.** It's hard for students to keep up when they miss school or arrive late. Reduce stress on test day by making sure your child begins class on time.
- **Ease anxiety.** Make plenty of positive comments. "You are prepared for this test. You're going to do great on it!" There's no need to pressure your child. Support and preparation are all she needs!

## Stay involved and review your child's assignments every day

Homework is a vital link between home and school. In addition to helping students master concepts, assignments give parents a sneak peek into what their children are learning.

Experts say that reviewing your child's work is important no matter what grade he is in—even if you don't understand it. Your daily interest sends the message that learning is important.



Set aside time each day to:

- **Look at your child's assignments.** Even if you're not at home when your child does his schoolwork, always ask to see it. Check that it is complete.
- **Ask your child** to tell you about his assignments. What was his favorite one to complete? Was it easy or was it challenging?
- **Praise your child's effort.** Compliment work that is neat and accurate.

## Five ways to make the most of your child's report card



Report card time can make parents almost as nervous as students. Is your child on track? Is she learning what she needs to know? Are you doing all you can to support her in school?

Use your child's report card as an opportunity to review her progress and talk about your expectations. Here's how:

1. **Take it seriously.** A report card can't tell you everything about how your child is doing, but your child's teacher spends a lot of time making sure that the report card shows a snapshot of where your child is now. Read it carefully.
2. **Remain calm**—especially if your child's grades weren't what you'd expected. Wait until you can quietly discuss what you and your child can do to improve her grades.
3. **Find something to praise.** Did your child earn a higher grade in math last quarter? Did the teacher make positive comments about her behavior or work habits?
4. **Let your child know** what you expect. Say things like, "You don't have to be *the* best. But I do expect you to do *your* best." Remind her that effort is as important as ability.
5. **Contact the teacher** if you or your child has any questions about her report card.