

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Cherokee Elementary School
Pascagoula, Mississippi



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Try a summer approach to ensure that your child keeps reading

School takes a break for the summer, but learning shouldn't! Reading daily over the summer is an important way for students to maintain the gains they make during the school year.

Summer reading shouldn't feel like homework. Let your child choose books he likes. Then promote reading enjoyment by helping him connect reading to simple summer pleasures.

To keep your elementary schooler reading all summer long:

- **Match books** to your child's summer activities. Look for sports books for a summer league player, for example, or camping books for a camper.
- **Encourage your child** to reread a favorite book. Then look for another by the same author, or one on the same topic.
- **Relax bedtime.** Occasionally, let your child stay up later when a book is too good to put down.
- **Start your child** on a series of mystery or thriller books. These page-turners draw kids into the reading habit.
- **Join a library challenge.** Many libraries have summer programs that award prizes to kids for reading.
- **Take books to new places.** Read in a hammock or tent, at the beach or pool, or under a shady tree in the park.



Encourage journaling with a theme

Keeping a journal is a low-pressure way for students to practice writing—no one else has to see what they write. To make journaling part of your child's summer routine, suggest a few interesting themes to get started.

Your student could keep:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a topic of interest—such as skateboarding—to research and write entries about. When were the first skateboards created? Who are some notable skateboarders? What tricks are they known for? How do they do them? How many skateboard parks are in the United States?
- **An observation log.** Your child could observe something over a period of time—such as a vegetable plant as it grows—and describe the changes.
- **A travel log.** Each trip away from home—whether far away or down the block—can be a journal entry. What did your traveler see or do? Who was there? What did it make your child think of?

Point in a positive direction

Guidance and encouragement from parents supports and inspires students. Your child benefits when you:



- **Act as a resource.** Suggest places where your child can find information.
- **Talk about** what your child is learning, and emphasize that learning involves effort and persistence.
- **Offer encouragement** in every class, but don't expect your child to perform the same in every subject.

Promote timeliness with actions, not words

Schedules and punctuality matter, in school and in life. If your child is stuck in slow motion when you need to move fast, avoid the urge to shout "Hurry up!" This can provoke anxiety, and probably won't make your child move faster. Instead, look for concrete actions that will move things along. Put your child's hairbrush in her hand. Help her put on her backpack. And be sure to set an example of the value of getting ready early.

Enjoy learning days in May

Help your child explore natural wonders—in outer space and your own yard—this month:

- **May 6—National Space Day.** View amazing images of space taken by the Hubble Telescope at www.nasa.gov/hubble.
- **May 20—National Endangered Species Day.** Find out about animals that need our help. A list of species and more information is available from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at tinyurl.com/8y88f2ru.
- **May 24—National Scavenger Hunt Day.** Make a list of items from nature (a narrow leaf, a white pebble, etc.). Go outside and see how many your child can find.





How can I help my chatty child learn to listen?

Q: Lately, the teacher says my first grader talks all the time—even when she is supposed to be listening or working. She's doing well in school otherwise. What should I do?

A: Humans are social creatures, and young children's social outlets have been limited in recent years. It's perfectly natural for your child to want to chat. But in school, it's an instinct she's going to have to learn to control.

The best way to help is to teach your child that there are times and places when people can do some things, and other times and places when those same things are not appropriate. Explain that you're going to play a game called My Time, Your Time. When it's My Time, you get to talk. Your child has to look at you and listen to what you're saying. When it's Your Time, your daughter gets to do the talking and you must listen.

Start by setting the timer for a very short amount of My Time—say 30 seconds. Give lots of praise for success. Then switch roles. Gradually, stretch out the times. Tell your child's teacher what you're doing at home. The teacher could say, "Olivia, it's my time now," when it's time to listen in class.

If you make My Time, Your Time a family tradition, when your child is a teen it will also be a great way to stay connected.



Are you supporting test-readiness?

Preparation is important for the best results on tests, and there are many ways families can help students prepare to do their best. Are you helping your child get ready for test success? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___ **1. Do you write** test dates on a family calendar and help your child schedule time to prepare?

___ **2. Do you have** your child spread study sessions out over several days?

___ **3. Do you enforce** a regular bedtime that allows your child to be well-rested every school day, not just on test days?

___ **4. Do you make** sure your child eats a healthy breakfast and dresses comfortably on test days?

___ **5. Do you proclaim** your confidence in your child's ability to 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.

" Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardour and attended to with diligence."
—Abigail Adams

Finish the school year strong

Some students slide into vacation mode weeks before the school year is over. They stop doing their best and start avoiding things that seem challenging. To keep your child focused on learning until the last day:

- **Review past worksheets,** quizzes and tests. Use them to talk about how much your child has learned this year.
- **Connect learning** to your child's interests. If he is choosing a report topic, for example, help him consider what he'd like to learn more about.
- **Set early deadlines.** If a long-term project is due on Wednesday, your child should plan to finish it by Monday. Then he'll have a cushion if a problem arises.

Hunt for lines of symmetry

When things that are *symmetrical* are divided in half, they are the same on both sides. The dividing line is called the *line of symmetry*.

To help your child discover symmetry, look at letters.

Remember that lines of symmetry can be vertical (as in the letter A) or horizontal (as in the letter B). They can even be diagonal.



Sometimes, a figure may have more than one line of symmetry. Write letters on paper and fold them where you think the line of symmetry will be. Do the two sides match?

Recap the year together

The end of the school year is near. Schedule time with your child to discuss the highlights and look ahead to next year. Ask your child:

- *What was your favorite project this year?*
- *What goals did you accomplish?*
- *What would you like to learn over the summer break?*
- *What excites you about next year? Is there a subject you'd like to improve in?*

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