

Parents Are Teachers, *Too!*



From the day children are born until they graduate from high school, they spend just 15 percent of their waking hours in school. The other 85 percent is spent outside school—and most of that time is spent at home.

That means that you are your child's most influential teacher. Fortunately, children are naturally curious and love to learn. Here are some of the best ideas you can use at home to make the most of the important educational influence you have.

QuickTips

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Encourage Reading

Experts say that encouraging children to read may be the most important thing families can do to ensure children's school success. Make it a point to:

- **Get the whole family involved** in reading books (or favorite parts of books) aloud to one another.
- **Be a reading role model**—make sure your child sees you reading. Have lots of reading materials around (newspapers, magazines, books, catalogs).
- **Go to the library often.** It's free and it has a better selection than any bookstore.
- **Read in unusual places**—under a tree, on the floor, in the park, in a tent, upstairs, downstairs, on the stairs!

When it's fun and interesting and everybody's doing it, reading will seem exciting and will become important to children.

Play Learning Games

Family fun time is also a great time for learning. Try these activities with your child:

- **Play a thesaurus game.** Choose a word at random in the thesaurus. See who can list the most synonyms. Or, take turns, with each family member adding a synonym that no one has mentioned.

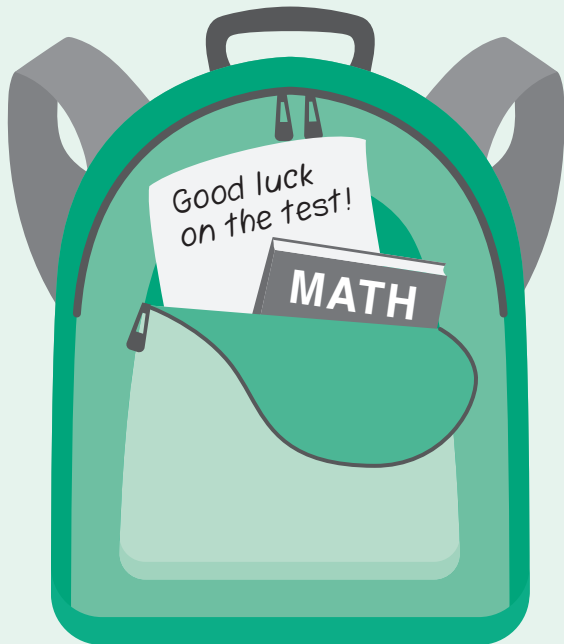


- **Send your child on a scavenger hunt.** List things that are easy to find around the house (something round, something that comes from another country).
- **Look at a picture together**—one with lots of objects in it (a catalog page is good). Then, put it away. See who can make the longest list of what was in the picture.
- **Collect some news articles** and cut off the headlines. Then, have your child try to match them with the right stories. Or, ask your child to write a new headline. You can also ask your child to underline facts in blue and opinions in red.

Show Your Child That You Care

Children need to know that their families love them, are proud of them and recognize their accomplishments. To show your child that you care:

- Find ways to say “I love you” every day—no matter what your child’s age.
- Make time to talk with your child and *really listen*. Being listened to builds a child’s confidence and willingness to try.
- Monitor your child’s schoolwork. Talk about progress and say that you are proud of your child’s accomplishments.



Make the Community Your Child’s Classroom

You can turn routine family activities into learning opportunities for your child:

- **At the grocery store.** Take a calculator along. Choose two or three items from your basket. Have your child estimate the total of these items. Then, use the calculator to check the answer.
- **When putting groceries away.** Use a package of cookies to give your child more practice estimating. Get two jars that are the same size. Fill one with something small (like beans). Fill the other with cookies. Have your child estimate how many items are in each jar. Count to check—and then enjoy a few of the cookies together!
- **Around town.** Pretend you and your child are reporters looking for the feature story for your local newspaper.

Have a “story conference” to decide what to write about. Once you’ve chosen your topic, make notes, record facts and take pictures (or make drawings). Together, write and publish your story. You’ll teach your child more about your community—and improve writing skills at the same time.



The Possibilities Are Endless

Children love learning, and they are learning all the time. The possibilities for learning at home are endless. You don’t have to be a trained teacher to make a difference. With a positive attitude about the fun of learning, and a little imagination, you can make the most of the important time you spend with your child.

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