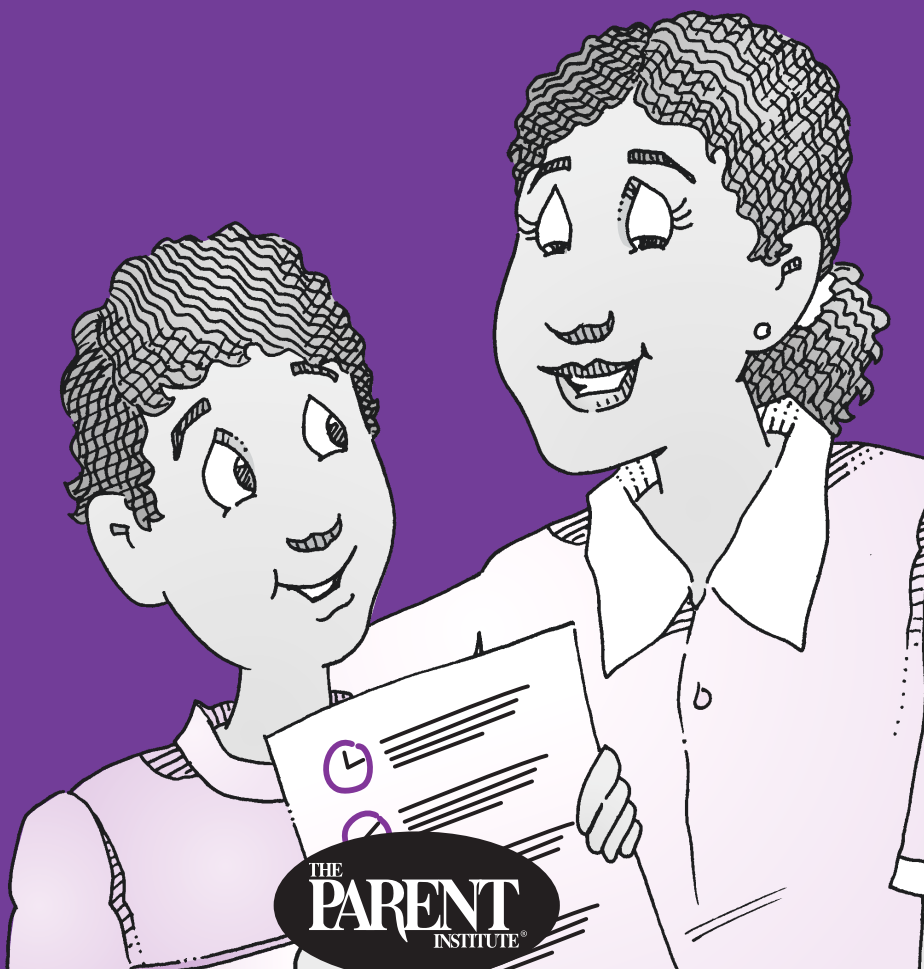


Skills *for* School Success

Ways Parents Can
Help Their Children
Do Better in School

USING TIME WISELY



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE®

One of a Series of Booklets for Parents



What's the most valuable resource in the world?

It's not gold or diamonds—it's time! Time is one thing that no amount of money can buy. Everyone starts the week with the same 168 hours to spend.

No one can change that. What *can* change is how the time is used.

Teaching your child to use time wisely is one of the most important ways to help him* do better both in and out of school. Studies show that the most successful people are usually those who use their time most effectively.

But using time wisely is a skill. Like any skill, it must be learned *and* practiced. This booklet presents ideas you can use at home to help your child learn to use time wisely.



Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate using "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.

Where Does All the Time Go? Help Your Child Make a Chart to Find Out

Like adults, children complain that they “don’t have enough time.” The fact is, they have all the time there is. They just need to learn to use their time wisely. To do that, they need to look at how they’re spending their time now.

For one full week, have your child write down all the things she does at home. Also have her record the amount of time each activity takes. Try making a chart like this:

	M	O	N	D	A	Y
	ACTIVITY:					TIME SPENT:
Before School	Showered					20 minutes
	Looked for Shoes					7 minutes
	Got Dressed					30 minutes
	Made Bed					3 minutes
	Ate Breakfast					15 minutes
	Looked for Books					10 minutes
	Can't Remember					5 minutes
After School	Had Snack					10 minutes
	Checked Email					30 minutes
	Talked on Phone					70 minutes
	Took Nap					30 minutes
	Cleaned Room					10 minutes
	Played With Friends					30 minutes
After Dinner	Did Homework					40 minutes
	Talked on Phone					15 minutes
	Read Book for Book Report					30 minutes
	Watched TV					30 minutes
	Can't Remember					20 minutes

After keeping the chart for a week, help your child evaluate how she is spending her time. What takes the most time? How much time does she spend watching TV? Talking on the phone? Doing homework? Relaxing? Once your child knows how she’s using her time, she can begin to plan how to use it more effectively.

Make a List of Time Wasters

Here are some of the most common ways students waste time every day. Make a time chart with your child (see previous page). See how many “time wasters” your child can add to the list. For example:

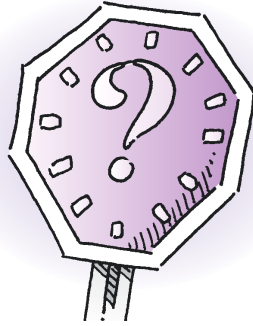


- **Oversleeping**—forgetting to set the alarm clock or lying in bed “just a few more minutes.”
- **Deciding what to wear**—having no shirts to wear because he forgot to put them in the clothes hamper.
- **Hunting for lost items**—shoes, homework papers, library books, school papers to be signed and returned.
- **Watching whatever is on TV**—just to have something to do.
- **Talking on the telephone**—just to chat.
- **Daydreaming**—thinking about something else while reading or doing homework.
- **Dozing off or losing focus** during schoolwork time.
- **Getting angry or frustrated**—thinking over and over about something that upsets him.
- **Giving in to distractions while doing homework**—watching TV “out of the corner of his eye.”
- **Allowing interruptions**—people coming and going, talking, asking him questions, loud noises.
- **Having to redo messy work**—hurrying through to finish it faster, only to have to do it all over again because it is too messy to read.

Watch for Signs of Poor Time Sense

Here are some signs that your child may not have developed a good sense of time:

- **Chronically late** (or very early) for school or anything else.
- **Often surprised** that there is not enough time for preferred activities.
- **Always seems to be asking**, “How much longer will it be until ... ?”
- **Unwilling to wait** even a short time for rewards. Expecting needs and wants to be met immediately.



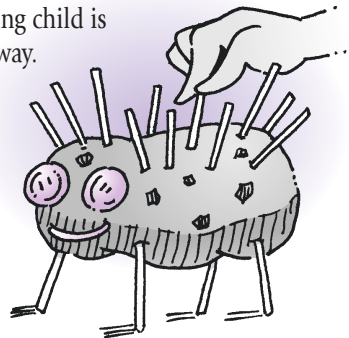
These Ideas Will Help Build Time Sense

To boost your child’s understanding of time:

- **Talk about time.** “It’s 5:30. The library closes at 6:00. That gives us 30 minutes to find a book.”
- **Estimate time.** Ask your child how long she thinks certain activities will take. For example, how long will it take to get dressed? Take a bath? Wash dishes? Read two pages? Solve three math problems? Time the actual activity. How close did your child’s estimate come?
- **Make a Porcupine Calendar** when your young child is waiting for a special event that is days or weeks away. (Adult supervision required.)

Take a potato. Glue on buttons for eyes and beads for a snout. Stick in toothpicks to make “quills”—one for each day until the event.

Every morning, your child can remove one quill from the porcupine. When there are no quills left, the big day has arrived.



Planning is the Secret to Using Time Wisely

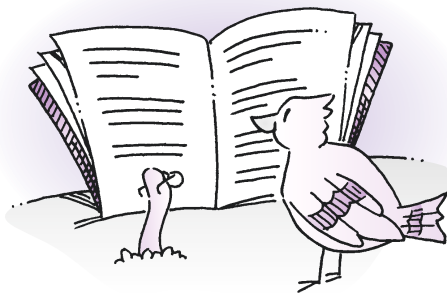
Teach your child, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Although there are 24 hours in a day, your child probably controls only about six or eight hours. The rest are spent in school or sleeping.

Children need to learn how to make a *plan* for using their time wisely. Here are some tips that will help.

Divide that controllable time into three time blocks: before school, after school and after dinner. Help him make another weekly chart like the example on page one. This time, instead of writing down what he actually *did*, have him plan what he *will do*.

Because kids need time to think, play and just *be*, try to leave *some* time unstructured every day.

Remember, some kids are night owls. Others are up before the sun rises. Finding your child’s “prime time” for schoolwork may be a key to success in school. If your child is an early riser, you may want to schedule homework time before school begins in the morning.



One mother found that after her daughter, a real early bird, set her study time for 5:00 a.m., her grades went up. Some families find that late evening study hours are best—as long as children get enough sleep, of course.

There is no single best time for homework. Work with your child to find the homework time that’s best for him.

Help Your Child Set Priorities

As you work with your child to help her plan how she wants to spend her time, she may soon discover a problem. There isn't always time to do everything she'd like to do! Now is the perfect time to help her learn another important time management skill: setting priorities.

Ask, "What's the most important thing you have to do today?" Perhaps it's to study for a history test. It may be to read a chapter in science. Or it could be to complete math homework.

Then suggest that your child do that work *first*. Ask, "What's second most important?" Suggest doing that next. Help her set priorities for the entire list. Then, you can point out, if she runs out of time, she will have spent her time doing the things that were most important.

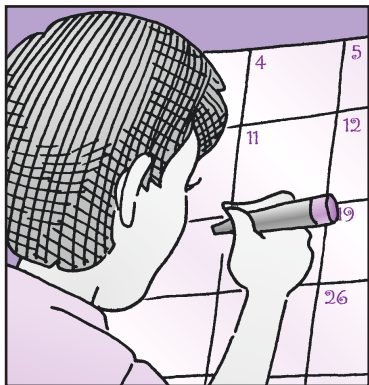
Talk about how you set priorities. You might say, "I need to finish a report for work. I also need to do laundry, but laundry can wait."

A 'To-Do' List May Be Just the Thing

After your child makes a chart of how her time is being spent, then a chart of how she plans to spend her time, you might suggest making a daily to-do list.



Organize Time With a Calendar



As kids grow older, they are expected to organize larger blocks of time. Using a big calendar can help.

Get the biggest calendar you can find. It should have lots of space to write on each day.

Encourage your child to mark key upcoming dates. Begin with birthdays, school holidays, visits to the dentist or planned family outings. Note the days that he regularly

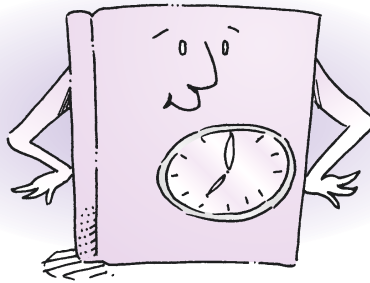
has to be somewhere—say soccer practice or scout meetings. Next, have your child add the due dates for homework assignments especially those that will take time to complete. Write in exam dates.

By looking at the calendar, your child will be able to schedule his time wisely. You might say, “You want to go to Tom’s sleepover, but I see your science project is due on Monday. You’ll have to get it finished early if you want to go.” Better yet, he may see it himself.

Make Updating the Calendar a Habit

The calendar will help your child keep track of lots of things. But it won’t work if he doesn’t remember to look at it!

Help him get into the habit of checking what’s on the schedule for the next day right after dinner each weeknight. Sunday night is a good time to check what’s happening the upcoming week. While he’s checking the calendar he can also add new things coming up in the days and weeks ahead.



Regular Homework Time Can Boost School Performance

Teachers say that of all the things students can do to improve their grades, setting a regular daily homework time is one of the most important. Here are some tips:

- 1. Agree on a regular homework time.** You may want to tell your child, “No television until homework is finished.” If there’s no homework assignment that day, the time should be used for review.
- 2. Have a regular place** for doing homework. A desk or a table in a quiet room with plenty of light is best.
- 3. Turn off the TV and radio.** Some studies say soft classical music can help people think better. You may want to experiment to see what produces the best grades.
- 4. Before your child begins,** talk with her about her assignments. Help her plan how she’ll use her time.
- 5. Set a good example.** While your child is doing homework, spend some time reading or working yourself.

Homework Order May Make a Difference

If your child can’t decide which homework assignment to do first, suggest that she do the most difficult homework first. This way, she can tackle her hardest work when she’s fresh and eager. Easier work can be saved for last.

Teach Your Child ‘Tricks of the Trade’ To Speed Homework Time

Help your child use homework time more efficiently—and learn more at the same time. Teach your child these strategies in:

Math

- **Memorize** the times tables.
- **Underline** the important information in word problems
- **Use a calculator** to check answers, find common multiples, etc.



Science/Social Studies

- **Keep a globe** and maps handy.
- **Find the facts** by asking *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*.

Reading

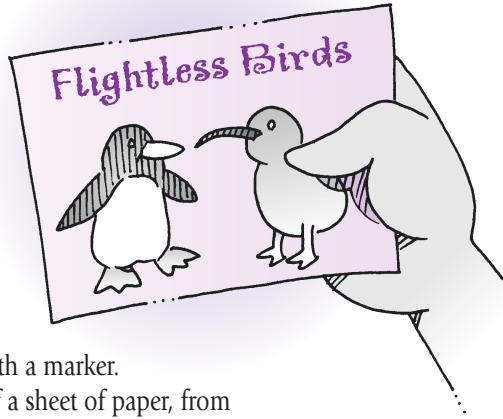
- **Strengthen vocabulary.** Keep a “word file” of the most commonly missed words. Put each word on a 3" x 5" card. Review the words when you have time.
- **Preview a chapter** before reading it. Headings and large or boldface type usually indicate main points. Read chapter summaries.
- **Read with a purpose.** Always ask, “What’s the main point here?”

Spelling

- **Take a pretest** at the beginning of the week. Practice only the words that are missed. Try a test on all the words again at the end of the week.
- **Practice spelling words** while riding in the car.

Writing

- **Always brainstorm** ideas before writing. Then “cluster” them into related groups of ideas. Older kids can make an informal outline.
- **Use index cards** for research. Be sure to put different topics or ideas on separate cards. This will make it easy to sort and organize them.
- **Keep a list** of commonly misspelled words. (A small address book, with tabs for each letter of the alphabet, works nicely.)
- **Use a spell-checker** when typing on a computer.



Note-Taking

- **Highlight important facts** with a marker.
- **Draw a line** down the middle of a sheet of paper, from top to bottom. Put key words or major points on the left side. Write details or definitions on the right side.
- **Use abbreviations** and symbols—such as:
 - ∴ (therefore)
 - (leads to or results in)
 - = (same as, defined as)
 - ★ (important)
 - ★★ (very important)
 - ★★★ (most important)
- **Develop a code** for words that are used frequently—for example: CW = Civil War, rdg = reading, w/ = with, w/in = within. (Be sure to keep a list of the codes.)

Help Your Child With Time Problems

Many children have problems with time. Some children:

- **Seem to be lazy.** They don't have any energy. They are inactive. They appear sluggish and take no action at all.
- **Dawdle and waste time.** They spend time idly. While they might be active, they get very little done.
- **Put things off.** They regularly put off until tomorrow what should be done today.



If your child has developed any of these symptoms of time problems, here are some ideas that may help.

If your child seems lazy:

- **Change the morning routine** to get him off to a good start. Help him set an alarm clock. Have him start with a morning shower. Exercise. Eat a good breakfast. A good start often leads to a good day.
- **Tackle projects or problems together.** Talk about them. Share possible solutions. Your assistance is often the special boost he needs.
- **Provide incentives.** Let your child earn a reward (a special outing, TV viewing time, time with you) by getting the task done.

If your child dawdles:

- **Play "Beat the Clock."** Set a timer to the time your child estimates he can finish a task. When the timer goes off and the task is done, he "wins." Doing this for homework assignments usually pays off in more free time, fewer homework battles, higher self-esteem, better grades—and lots of praise from you.

- **Count to 100.** Most children love it when you start counting as they begin a task. If your child can get dressed for bed by the count of 80 the first time, see if she can finish by 75 the next time. Post the results on the refrigerator door. A sense of accomplishment comes as she's able to whittle down the time.
- **Count down to zero.** Announce: 20 minutes to go, 10 minutes, five minutes, one minute!
- **Turn on the music.** Have your child see how much work she can get done while a favorite song is playing. (Often, the faster the song, the faster she'll go!)
- **Promote positive self-talk.** Show your child that talking to herself can speed things up. Tailor the talk to special needs, like, "It's time to get up. I'm not going to waste any time getting ready for school." Or, "I'm not going to stop this until I finish. It will be great to complete this on time."



If your child puts things off:

- **Set clear time limits.** Insist on a set time for a task to be done. Make sure your child does it and reward her accordingly.
- **Tackle the easy parts first.** This makes it easier for some children to get started.
- **Reduce distractions.** No phone calls, chores or interruptions during homework, for example. Also, have a set place for each activity.
- **Praise progress.** Don't say negative things like, "You never get anything done."

Plan Backward to Get Ahead

If your child is always late, maybe he shouldn't plan ahead. It might be better to plan *backward!*

Say your child has to be at a music lesson at five o'clock.

He might plan backward this way:

"I always use the restroom or get a drink when I get there, so I should plan on being five minutes early (4:55)."

"It takes 15 minutes to get there, so I should leave by 4:40."

"Before I leave, I have to walk the dog. That's another 10 minutes (4:30)."

"Before that, I need to change clothes and eat a snack.

Add another 15 minutes (4:15)."

"Considering the phone might ring (five minutes), that means I should start getting ready at about 4:10."



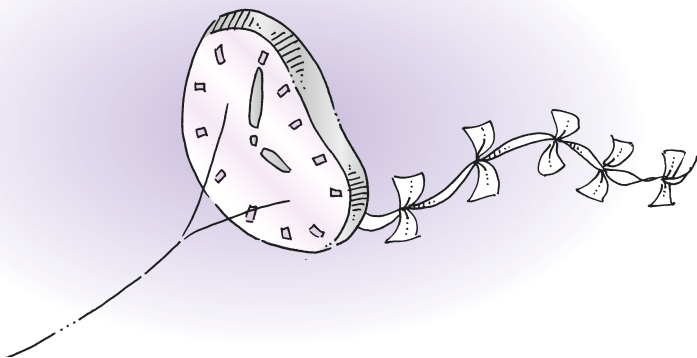
Give Your Child the Gift of Time

It's not possible to buy time or store it or borrow it. No matter how much you love your child, you cannot give him more hours in the day. But you can give your child the great gift of knowing how to use time wisely.

Plan to Leave Some Time Unplanned

In today's busy world, it's a mistake to make plans for every waking moment. Children, like adults, need some time to do something spontaneous.

Time flies, but remember you're the navigator.



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