

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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Discipline strategies that improve behavior at home and school

All children misbehave from time to time. But disruptive behavior in the classroom makes it hard for students to learn. Creating a productive learning environment takes the combined efforts of teachers, students and families.

To encourage the behavior in your child that will make her an asset to the class:

- **Set positive goals.** Focus on what you want your child to do, not what you want her to avoid doing.
- **Be clear about expectations** and limits. Enforce rules every time.
- **Correct misbehavior simply.** Move close to your child, look her in the eye, and briefly tell her what she should do. Repeat as necessary.
- **Use logical consequences** for misbehavior whenever possible. (If your child throws a tantrum, she's probably tired. She'll have to go to bed earlier to get more rest.)
- **Involve your child in solving problems.** Kids who have helped solve a problem are usually more committed to the solution.
- **Give your child practice making good decisions.** Offer her limited choices—just make sure you can live with all the options.
- **Show your love.** Discipline is an act of love, not a substitute for it. Your child needs to know you love her no matter what she does.



Previewing the reading boosts comprehension

When students are reading to learn, it helps to spend a little time previewing the text before diving in. Have your child consider the chapter's title. Does it offer clues about the main idea? What do the subheadings, boldface words, pictures or graphs tell her about what's important in the content?

Source: M. Kelly, "How to Teach Students to Preview Reading Assignments," ThoughtCo., niscw.com/preview.

Cultivate curiosity

Studies show that kids who are motivated to learn by their own curiosity and interests stay motivated longer and achieve more in school. To nurture this kind of motivation:



- **Help your child discover** what interests him. Before he starts a project, have him think about what he wants to learn from it.
- **Ask him to share** what he's learning with you. Show enthusiasm: "What a cool thing to know! Tell me some more!"

Source: L. Campbell, "The Reason Curious Kids Are More Likely to Succeed in School," Healthline, niscw.com/curious.



Schedule time to celebrate learning

Pull out your calendar and mark these special days this month to help your child learn about culture, citizenship, tolerance, gratitude and more:

- **Nov. 4**—King Tut Day. Check out a book or go online together to find out about the discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb on this day in 1922.
- **Nov. 6**—Election Day in the U.S. Talk to your child about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and why it is important to vote.
- **Nov. 16**—International Tolerance Day. Discuss the importance of being respectful and trying to understand people who have beliefs or viewpoints that differ from yours.
- **Nov. 18-24**—National Family Week. Spend extra time as a family this week. Tell family stories, play games, cook meals and read together!
- **Nov. 22**—American Thanksgiving. Have family members make a list of all the people and things they are thankful for.

It's your child's homework

What's the best way to help your child with homework? By supporting her efforts to do her homework herself! This means you can help your child:

- **Manage her time.** Set a daily homework time when your child is most alert.
- **Decide what to do first**—the toughest work, or the easiest? Experiment to see which way works best for her.
- **Understand a concept.** Explain if she asks, but don't do the work for her.



Source: "Help with homework can affect child's persistence," Science Daily, niscw.com/autonomy.



What should I do if my child feels left out at school?

Q: My eight-year-old has recently been saying he doesn't want to go to school. He says he has no friends. How do I handle this?

A: It's not unusual for a child who feels left out not to want to go to school. But you are right to take this seriously. Kids who feel they have no friends may turn to negative or dangerous behaviors as a way of fitting in. Their grades may also begin to drop.

To support your child and help him build the skills he needs to get along with others:

- **Appreciate his honesty.** Many kids are embarrassed to tell Mom and Dad they don't have anyone to play with.
- **Reassure him that you will help him** make the situation better. Be gentle. Kids who feel rejected often feel it is their fault.
- **Ask his teacher if there have been any recent changes** in the classroom that might be affecting your child, such as seating changes or the arrival of a new student. Enlist the teacher's help to find solutions.
- **Find ways for him to meet children** who share his interests. Sign him up for an extracurricular activity he likes. Enjoying the activity with the other kids will make it easier for him to relate to them.



Are you on your child's school team?

Working as a team with the school helps your child get a better education. Decades of research show that kids with involved parents learn more and do better in school. Are you a team player? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you review** all the information your child brings home from school?
- ___ **2. Have you discussed** the school rules with your child? Have you made it clear you expect her to follow them?
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** your child gets to school on time each day, well-rested and ready to learn?
- ___ **4. Have you met** with your child's teacher at least once this year?

- ___ **5. Do you ask** the teacher how you can help if your child is struggling?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are supporting the school and your child. For each no, try that idea.

"It takes both sides to build a bridge."

—Fredrik Nael

Maintain a healthy balance in your child's schedule

Kids can learn a lot from structured after-school activities. But they also need plenty of free time when they can relax and choose for themselves what to do. This ability to self-direct helps them in school.

Review your child's schedule. Does he have enough time for schoolwork, sleep and playing with friends—and still have some free time? If too many activities are getting in the way, ask him to choose only one or two he really enjoys. He'll be happier and healthier—and he'll do better in school.

Source: J.E. Barker and others, "Less-structured time in children's daily lives predicts self-directed executive functioning," *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Encourage your child to plan for responsibility

If keeping track of assignments and turning them in is a challenge for your child, talk about ways to get organized. Then, ask her to develop a plan. "You're having trouble getting to school with all your homework. Can you come up with a plan that would help you remember? Think about it, and we'll discuss it tonight."



Fitness enhances learning

Getting plenty of daily exercise can improve students' memory and concentration. To add movement to your child's day:

- **Play active games**, such as Tag. Shoot hoops or jump rope.
- **Put on fast music** and do chores to the beat.
- **Limit recreational screen time.**
- **Set an example.** If your child sees you making time for exercise, he may, too.

Source: L. Mongeau, "How a growing number of states are hoping to improve kids' brains: exercise," The Hechinger Report, nswc.com/fitkids.

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