

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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## Help your student navigate the complex world of online research

Elementary school students may have grown up with computers, but they are just beginning to learn to do research online. The internet offers an ocean of resources—many that are reliable and some that are misleading or downright inappropriate. To help your child surf the internet safely and evaluate what she finds:



- **Supervise.** Guide your child as she browses the internet. Ask her teacher for a list of reliable websites and relevant keywords for specific assignments.
- **Use search engines** that have “safe search” settings, such as *KidzSearch.com* or *duckduckgo.com*.
- **Talk about advertising.** Some sites pay search engines to list their sites first. Tell your child that being on top of a search list doesn’t mean a site is better. Teach her to look for small labels saying advertisement, or for links to sites that are selling something.
- **Discuss credibility.** Help your child determine if a site is reputable. Is it presenting facts, or opinions? Does it give a balanced view? Who is the author? Does the site list sources for the information it presents? Who is the publisher? Has the site been updated recently?



## Self-talk can stand up to peer pressure

You might think that you won’t have to deal with peer pressure until your child is in middle school. But elementary schoolers can feel the same pressure to fit in and do what “everyone” is doing—even when they know it’s wrong.

That can mean going along with teasing someone on the playground. Or, it might mean watching a movie at a friend’s house that would never be allowed at home.

Don’t wait to teach your child how to deal with peer pressure. Let him know that he has the power to do what he knows is right, even if everyone else seems to be doing something different.

To make that easier, teach him phrases he can repeat to himself:

- **I can make choices** for myself.
- **It’s OK if I make choices** that are not the same as the ones my friends make.
- **I can say,** “You are my friend, but I won’t do that.”

Source: D. Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk*, Pallas Communications.

## Respect supports learning

Respectful behavior in the classroom creates an atmosphere that fosters learning. To teach your child to respect others:

- **Show** him what respectful behavior looks like. Model it, and point out other people’s respectful behavior.
- **Praise** him when he is respectful. “I’m proud that you waited for me to finish talking before you told your story.”
- **Correct** him gently, and in private. “Remember what we said you can do when you want something?”
- **Pass** compliments along. If a neighbor reports that your child held the door for her, let him know his behavior was appreciated.

Source: F. Fulleylove-Krause and others, “Encouraging Respectful Behavior,” University of Minnesota Extension, [niscw.com/teach-respect](http://niscw.com/teach-respect).

## Celebrate imagination!

April 27th is National Tell a Story Day. Celebrate with your family by taking turns telling made-up stories. For inspiration, gather a variety of objects—for example, a toy animal, a paper clip, an old shoe and a fork.



Challenge family members to tell tales that include as many of the objects as they can.

## Go on a fraction hunt

Here’s a fun way to help your child relate fractions to her own life:

Together, look for fraction facts around your home. For example: One-third of the rooms in the house have beds in them. Three-fourths of the windows are open. Four-fifths of the people in the family like strawberries. One-quarter of the cars on the street are blue.





## How can I make my child feel better about writing?

**Q:** My son seems to enjoy school, and he likes math and reading. But when he gets a writing assignment, he gets discouraged almost immediately. What can I do to help?

**A:** Communicating effectively in writing is an important lifelong skill. But for many children, it doesn't come easily. Practice will help. So, tell your child that each assignment he does will make him a better writer.



To support him as he builds writing skills:

- **Start early.** Writing takes time. The day your child receives the assignment is the day to help him begin work.
- **Brainstorm.** Suggest that he write down everything he knows about the topic. He may be surprised by how much information he already has.
- **Talk it through.** Have your son tell you what he would like to say in his report. After your conversation, it may be easier for him to write a first draft.
- **Suggest that he bypass** the introduction for now. The first few sentences can be the hardest to write. It's fine if your child does them last.
- **Take a break.** Have your child put his rough draft aside for a day. The next day, he may be better able to see what works and what doesn't.
- **Help him edit.** He should check spelling, punctuation and organization. Compliment his work!



## Do you help your child relax before tests?

When some students face tests, anxiety prevents them from showing what they really know. Are you helping your child put tests into perspective so she can do her best? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** with your child about your expectations? Tell her that your love for her does not depend on a test score.
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage** your child to talk to her teacher? The teacher may be able to reassure your child that she is prepared.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you help** your child create and carry out a study plan to prepare for a test?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your child to use positive self-talk? If she gets stuck during the

test, she can say, "I know this! The answer will come to me."

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you say,** "You are ready," as she goes to school?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are encouraging a positive attitude about tests. For each no, try that idea.*

"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."  
—Theodore Roosevelt

## Set responsibility in motion

It stands to reason: Kids who treat school-work responsibly are more successful in school. To foster your child's sense of responsibility, make it a point to:

- **Set age-appropriate rules** and enforce consequences consistently.
- **Let your child make decisions.** He has to do his homework, but you can let him decide which subject to do first.
- **Help your child find** meaningful ways to contribute to your family, the school and the community.
- **Adjust responsibilities** as he matures.

Source: M. Purcell, LCSW, "Building Responsible Kids," PsychCentral, [niscw.com/elem\\_responsible](http://niscw.com/elem_responsible).

## Keep progress in sight

Sometimes kids feel that they'll *never* learn a skill they are struggling with. When your child gets discouraged, shift her focus from how far she has to go to how far she has come. "Last year you couldn't add three-digit numbers. Now that's easy for you." Tell her you know she can learn this, too.



## Build a better afternoon

Learning shouldn't stop at the end of the school day. Enrich your child's afternoons and support his education by providing structure and opportunities for him to continue learning after the bell rings:

- **Set a homework routine.** "Same time, same place," encourages effective study habits.
- **Set goals.** Ask your child what he'd like to accomplish, and plan ways he can do it.
- **Add math,** science, history and more. Help him manage his allowance, or do a science experiment. Visit a historic site. Show him that learning is useful and fun!

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