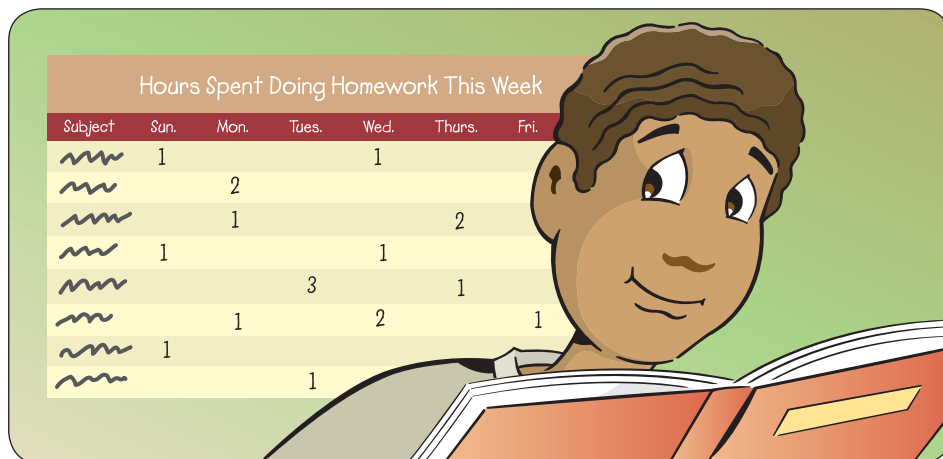


Elementary School Parents[®]

Quashnet School

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make the difference!



Work with your child to set priorities and manage time

Teachers tell you he's bright. You know he has tons of ability. But somehow, your child never seems to be able to get anything accomplished.

He doesn't finish his homework ... or, if he does, he forgets to turn it in. His grades are suffering.

Children with these problems aren't lazy. They simply don't know how to set priorities and manage their time. Here are some ways you can help a child who never seems to get anything done:

- **Enforce a homework time.** Kids who are disorganized will never get around to doing homework on their own. Try a schedule that lets your child relax a little after school. But once homework time comes, it's time to get to work.
- **Focus on productivity** instead of grades. Reward your child for finishing and turning in

homework. Praise him for the time he spends reading. Once he develops better work habits, his grades should improve.

- **Set priorities.** Talk about what your child has to do for tomorrow and for the week. Which are the most important tasks? Make sure those things get completed first.
- **Help with time management.** At least once a week, look over your child's schedule. If there's a big project due on Friday, don't let him wait until Thursday to start.
- **Help your child track** the time he spends on homework. How many hours did he study math this week? When his math grade starts to improve, he will see the connection between his effort and results.

Source: M. Levine, *The Myth of Laziness*, Simon & Schuster.

Midyear is the time to review attendance



The halfway point of the school year is approaching. It's time for a mid-year checkup on your

child's attendance.

Researchers in Oregon looked at what happened when students missed as few as one day every two weeks. Here's what they found:

- **School absences add up.** Kids who aren't in school can't learn what's being taught.
- **Missing school** becomes a habit. Children who miss a lot of school in kindergarten are still absent frequently in fifth grade.
- **There is a "clear and consistent relationship"** between early attendance and later achievement. Kids who come to school in the early grades are still doing well in middle and high school.

How many days of school has your child missed? It's not too late to get back on track so she can have a successful school year—and school career.

Source: M. Buehler and others, "Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absence in Oregon Schools," Attendance Works, www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Oregon-Research-Brief.pdf.

Use 'goal strips' to keep your elementary schooler motivated



Your child probably has things he wants to accomplish at home and at school. But he may not always know *how* to accomplish them. Here's a simple way to help your child clearly define his goals and remain motivated to achieve them:

With your child, cut a piece of colored paper into a strip about three inches wide and 12 inches long. Fold the paper strip into three even sections.

On the first section, have your child write the words: "I will." Then in the center section, have him write one thing he wants to accomplish: "read for 20 minutes."

The third section should tell when he is going to do it: "every day." This

formula—*will + what + when*—is a key to staying motivated.

You child can create other strips with other goals. "I will make my bed every morning." "I will study my vocabulary words every Thursday night."

He should post the strips where he can regularly see them. Looking at these strips will remind him of what he wants to accomplish. He can take down strips when he achieves his goal and replace them with new goals.

Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters*, Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster.

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

—Benjamin Franklin

Listening is the key to getting your child to open up to you



"Ashley came to school today in these weird pants. I think she called them *cougots* ..."

"Actually," you chime in helpfully, "those pants are called *culottes*."

So now your child knows the correct name for the pants. On the other hand, she's stopped telling you the story.

It's important to keep the lines of communication open with your child. Studies show that when children feel connected to their parents they tend to do better academically.

So if you want your child to talk, you have to *listen*. And that often means not correcting her when she uses the wrong word. It also means

not interrupting what she's saying and waiting until she gets to the end of her story before commenting.

Later, you can share the right word for those weird pants that Ashley wore. But for now, wouldn't you rather find out about why your daughter started the story in the first place? Perhaps she didn't just want to talk about clothes. Maybe she was going to tell you something else.

The key to keeping the lines of communication open is simple: If you want to find out what's going on at school and in your child's life, avoid the urge to interrupt her when she is telling you about it!

Source: A.E. Wolf, *I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut Up*, HarperCollins.

Are you helping your child learn family history?



Learning about your family roots is a great way to ignite curiosity and bring history to life.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your child learn more about your family:

___1. Do you share old family photos and family stories with your child?

___2. Do you prepare family recipes together? Preparing and sharing food is a great way to build traditions.

___3. Do you encourage your child to ask older family members about their memories of childhood?

___4. Have you looked on a map to see the country or countries that your ancestors came from? Check out books about those countries when you go to the library, too.

___5. Are you keeping a family journal to preserve your memories? Preserve photos and letters from older generations.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* helps give your child roots in family history. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Four tactics can strengthen your child's reading comprehension



Beginning readers work hard to figure out and say words. As their reading skills improve, however, they do more higher-order thinking. This goes far beyond pronouncing words. It involves understanding and using information. At this point, reading becomes learning! As your child begins to comprehend more of what he reads:

1. **Summarize.** Talk with your child about the material. Recall facts (such as main characters, setting and plot), but also go further. What problems did characters face? Why? How does the story progress from beginning to end? Why did things turn out the way they did?
2. **Make connections.** What has your child already learned or experienced before that relates

to the story? How is the story like or unlike others he's read? If the story was about a mouse, for example, what does he know about mice that matches or doesn't match the story?

3. **Solve problems.** Consider how characters were affected by each other's actions. Imagine things from different viewpoints. What if your child took each character's place? Would he make the same decisions they did? How might this have changed the story?
4. **Apply knowledge.** What was the message or moral of the story? Did the author have a clear opinion? If so, what was it? Does your child agree? How can your child apply what he's read to real life?

Source: P. Marshall, "Reading Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking Skills," K12Reader, www.k12reader.com/reading-comprehension-and-higher-order-thinking-skills/.

Q: Perhaps my daughter will grow up to be a lawyer. But for now, I'd sure like it if I didn't feel like I was going to court every time I ask her to do something. She starts arguing with me. I argue right back. And the next thing we know, we're in a full-blown power struggle. How can I avoid feeling like every conversation with my daughter is a negotiation?

Questions & Answers

A: It's certainly important for your daughter to learn how to express her ideas. You want to raise a child who knows how to advocate for herself. That's what will help her say *no* when she's a teen facing peer pressure.

Still, there are some things that really aren't open for debate. You know when it's time for her to go to bed. You know when it's time for her turn off the computer. And doing homework is just one of those things that's part of her daily routine.

When you sense an argument over something that is not open to debate, you need to smile and stay firm. "Sorry, sweetie, it's bedtime." Then don't say anything else.

Other times, you may be willing to listen. Let your daughter know what she can negotiate and what she can't. "I'm happy to talk about what you want to do this weekend. Let's talk about it to see if you can do what you want and we can still see Grandma." The key is not to get sucked into an argument. As you've learned, no one really wins in a power struggle!

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Show your child how to give meaningful gifts that are free!



Many people exchange gifts over the holiday season. While kids enjoy receiving gifts from family, they also enjoy being able to give gifts. Giving gifts can be a great sense of pride for your child.

But does your child know what type of gifts are the most meaningful? These gifts don't cost money. They take time and come straight from the heart.

Share a few of the many ways your child can give gifts this holiday season. He can:

- **Make a list.** Write "My 10 Best Memories With Grandpa."
- **Promise to play** a favorite game with a family member or a neighbor who is home-bound.
- **Promise to do a chore** for an entire month. No whining!
- **Record an audio** or video message for a loved one who is far away.
- **Bake cookies.** Take them to someone who may not receive many homemade gifts.
- **Create a calendar for 2013.** Decorate it with personalized artwork, one drawing for each month.
- **Offer to run errands** for an elderly neighbor.
- **Record himself reading a book** for a younger sibling to read along.

Source: B. Taylor, *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World*, Warner Books.

It Matters: Building Character

Instill a sense of gratitude in your child



Parents have been reminding kids to say *thank you* for ages. Now research links gratitude to many

benefits, including better grades, relationships and even health.

Researchers also say gratitude can be taught—even to kids who seem less positive. These children may actually see the greatest improvement!

Experts advise parents to:

- **Be role models.** When someone does something kind, show appreciation. If your child takes out the trash without being told, take note. "You helped the family without being asked. Thank you!" This demonstrates how to be thankful.
- **Make gratitude lists.** Help your child focus on what he has. He may not have the new sneakers or video game he wants, but there is always something for which to be thankful. Many of people's most treasured "things" aren't things at all. They're people, friendships, abilities and accomplishments.
- **Shift your focus.** This winter, turn your attention to family time and helping others. What do you have that others might need or want? How can you share? Your family might donate items, volunteer or find small ways to be kind to others.

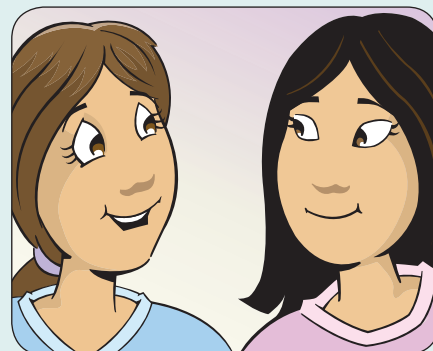
Source: C. Butler, "Teaching kids to be grateful may have long-term benefits even though it's not easy," *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/teaching-kids-to-be-grateful-may-have-long-term-benefits-even-though-its-not-easy/2011/11/14/gIQAbltshN_story_1.html.

Focus on four areas as you help your child develop character

You want your child to develop her best qualities and share them with the world. You also want her to connect with other students and thrive in the classroom.

Your child can develop the strong character she needs for school success if you teach her to:

1. **Show empathy.** Teach your child the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Take time to imagine how others might feel. This will help your child make better decisions.
2. **Take responsibility.** We're all accountable for our actions. Set a good example by staying in control when it's difficult. Think before acting. Encourage your child to tell herself, "I can't control others. But I can control my choices and actions."
3. **Be flexible.** Model compromise and negotiation by listening to



others' opinions. Encourage your child to do the same. Having her way is not as important as doing the right thing.

4. **Be respectful.** Your child should use words rather than negative physical behavior to express feelings. Role-play situations and take turns responding to imaginary challenges she might face.

Source: K. Ruskin, "How to Raise a Child of Character," *PsychCentral*, <http://psychcentral.com/lib/2012/how-to-raise-a-child-of-character/>.

Encourage community service to foster responsibility



Research shows that when kids participate in community service programs—and reflect on how it helps others—they build character and a sense of responsibility.

Consider how your family can be of service. Ask yourselves, "Why is it important to pitch in? What do we have to offer?"

List age-appropriate options for your child, such as:

- **Recycle and reuse.** Let your child sort through family items that

can be recycled, given away or used for new purposes.

- **Give time.** Call local volunteer centers and ask how kids can help. They might make food for the homeless or visit with nursing home residents.
- **Notice needs.** Look for ways to lend a hand. Could you clean up a local playground? Shovel a neighbor's driveway? Every good deed makes a difference!

Source: "Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen," U.S. Department of Education, www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/citizen/citizen.pdf.