

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Harvard Elementary School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



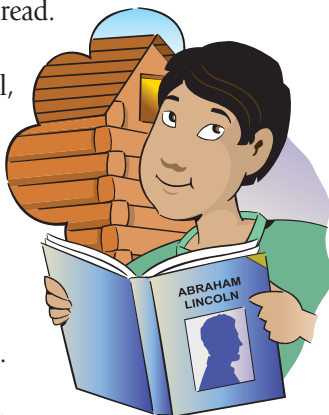
November 2013

Reading at home boosts your child's vocabulary and leads to success

Children need to be able to read words, sound them out and pronounce them correctly. But they also need to know what those words mean. Otherwise, they'll struggle to understand what they have just read.

Reading at home is one of the most effective ways to boost your child's vocabulary. Best of all, you can do it as part of your regular read-aloud time. Here are some ways you can increase the number of words in your child's vocabulary:

- **Read a variety of books.** If you usually read fiction together, try a book that explains how something works. Check out a book about a country you'd like to visit. Or read a biography about a person your child admires.
- **Look for new words as you read.** "President Lincoln grew up in a *cabin*. What do you think that word might mean?" Look for pictures that can help your child figure out new words.
- **Help your child create** his own dictionary. All you need is a notebook with a page for each letter. When you discover a new word that he wants to remember, have him write it and its definition in the notebook.
- **Listen for interesting words** as you're watching TV. News programs often include words your child may not know. "Do you know what a *hurricane* is? Let's look it up."



Source: S. Darling, "Strategies for Engaging Parents in Home Support of Reading Acquisition," The Reading Teacher.



Protect your child from cyberbullies

Your child would probably tell you if she got a bad grade on a test. But what if she's being cyberbullied? Many children keep that information a secret. As a result, parents don't find out until the bullying has gone on too long.

Here are some tips to protect your child from this kind of bullying:

- **Talk about cyberbullying.** Discuss how bullying isn't always done in person. Let her know that no one should put up with bullying.
- **Monitor computer time.** In elementary school, you should know the password for any website your child visits.
- **Support your child.** She needs you to be on her side.
- **Document cyberbullying.** Save screen shots of comments made to or about your child. Share them with the school and with law enforcement.

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, "Stop Bullying: What Parents Can Do," www.stopbullying.gov/topics/cyberbullying/parents/index.html.

Three ways to celebrate Geography Awareness Week

Geography is more than maps and state capitals. It's about how places shape people—and people shape places. During Geography Awareness Week (Nov. 17-23), here are some things to do at home:

1. **Map it!** Keep an atlas nearby when you watch the news. Look up unfamiliar places.
2. **Go on a virtual trip.** Visit the library and check out books about a country you'd like to visit. Then go online to look at more pictures.
3. **Learn about your community.** Who first settled in your town? How are you connected to the rest of the world?



Source: National Geographic, "My Wonderful World," www.mywonderfulworld.org/parents_welcome.html.

Make book reports a success

Book reports can be intimidating. Help your child break them into manageable parts:

- **Choose a book** that interests him.
- **Talk about what** book reports include.
- **Ask questions** to help your child focus his writing.



Homework can improve your child's education

Studies show that homework teaches students numerous things, including:

- **Reliability.**
- **Time-management.**
- **Persistence.**
- **Study skills.**

Source: "What research says about the value of homework: At a glance," The Center for Public Education, <http://tinyurl.com/b8auqdh>.

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Is my daughter old enough to handle a cell phone?

Q: My child wants a cell phone. She says her friends all have them. I'm worried that she's not old enough for the responsibility. On the other hand, I would feel safer if I could call her. Is she too young? How can I help her use technology responsibly?

A: Many parents feel the same way you do—that a cell phone would give them peace of mind. But without putting some rules in place, a cell phone can become a very expensive toy.

If you do decide your daughter is ready for a cell phone, consider a step-by-step approach:

1. Allow your child to only call family members at first. At the end of the month, check the cell phone bill with her. It's good for her to know that you can always check to see what she's been doing with the phone.

2. Consider adding texting if you see that she is using her phone responsibly. But remind your child that her phone should never detract from her schoolwork. Give her a limited number of texts per month. Again, check the bill together at the end of the month.

She may make mistakes. When she does, take a step back on your plan. Help her understand that having a cell phone is a privilege.



Is your child responsible for homework?

When your child completes his homework every night, he's not just memorizing spelling words and math facts. He's also learning to take responsibility for his work and his learning. Help your child build responsibility by putting him in charge of homework time. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

___ **1. Does your child know** that homework is his responsibility?

___ **2. Do you have** a regular study time every day? Your child knows that he has to do something academic during that time.

___ **3. Do you give** your child some choice in how he does homework? He can choose which subject to study first, for example.

___ **4. Do you look** over your child's homework to see that it's finished?

___ **5. Do you encourage** your child to talk with his teacher if he faces regular struggles with homework?

How well are you doing?

Each yes means responsibility for homework is where it belongs. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mistakes can be great learning opportunities

Research shows that making mistakes is often one of the best ways to learn.

Sometimes, it's best to let your child make mistakes. Don't keep nagging him to write the book report that's due on Friday. Instead, let him find out what happens if he doesn't finish it.

Help your child identify his own mistakes. What different choices might he have made?

Source: University of Exeter, "Why We Learn From Our Mistakes," Science Daily, July 3, 2007, <http://tinyurl.com/3bvmmm>.

Prepare for test success

When kids do well on tests, it shows they've learned the material—and it makes them feel great! This confidence leads to future success. Encourage your child to:

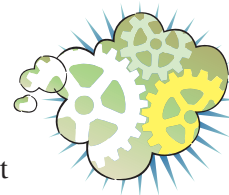
- **Play 'Beat the Clock.'** Can your child complete 10 math problems in 15 minutes?
- **Memorize lists** using acronyms, such as HOMES for the Great Lakes.
- **Use a study plan.** Studying over several days reduces stress and boosts grades.

Source: A. Dolin, M.Ed., "10 Tips to Help Your Elementary School Daughter Study," Parenting Pink, <http://parentingpink.com/?p=13063>.

Help your child build critical thinking skills

Critical thinking skills are essential for your child's academic success. To help her build these important skills:

- **Talk about future events** to practice planning ahead.
- **Encourage her to catch** "mistakes" that you make in grammar and math.
- **Engage in activities** that include building and sorting.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Stacey Marin.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013