

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Harvard Elementary School



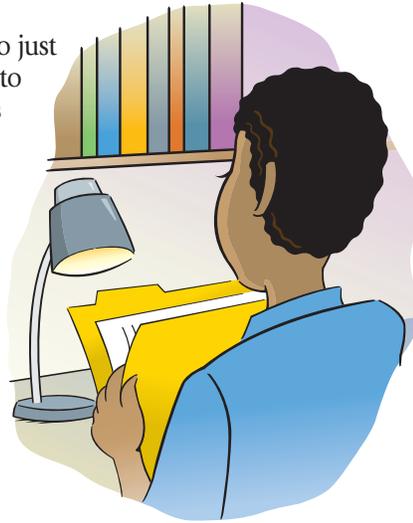
September 2013

Help your child get off to a good start this year as an active learner

While your child is a student, learning is his job. To do it well, he has to be an active learner—a student who takes action instead of just listening.

The more involved he is in his education, the more he'll enjoy learning—and the better he'll do. To help your child be an active learner this school year, make sure he:

- **Arrives prepared.** It's not enough to just show up for school. It's also important to get a good night's sleep, eat a nutritious breakfast, and bring necessities. Doing these things will help your child pay attention and succeed in class.
- **Participates in discussions.** Your child should ask questions, make comments and exchange ideas with others. It's especially useful for your child to ask questions when something is confusing to him. Teachers encourage and appreciate this.
- **Stays organized.** Help your child create a system for organizing papers, assignments and other materials. Also have him collect a few classmates' phone numbers. If he's forgotten the homework assignment, he'll have someone to call for it.
- **Is persistent.** School can be tough, and doing well takes work. Support your child as he tackles assignments and reviews for tests. Make sure that he sets aside time to study daily, and remind your child often that his efforts will pay off!



School success depends on excellent attendance

For your child to get the most out of school, he needs to be there—and on time! Research shows that missing 10 percent or more of school days hurts success. To prevent absenteeism:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Maintain routines.
- **Schedule carefully.** Make appointments during non-school hours.
- **Seek help when needed.** If your family struggles with transportation, child-care or other issues, talk with school staff.



Source: H.N. Chang and M. Romero, "Present, Engaged, and Accounted For," National Center for Children in Poverty, www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html.

Simplify homework time

Promote good study habits when it comes to homework this year. Remember to:

- **Choose** a regular time and place for studying.
- **Encourage** organization.
- **Postpone** screen time.
- **Be** supportive.



Homework time is a chance for you to learn about your child. What are her strengths? Areas to improve? Work with her teacher to build on her strengths and overcome challenges.

Establish routines at the start of the school year

The start of a new school year is a good time to develop routines that will help your child succeed. As a family, reestablish your routines for:

- **Homework time.**
- **Screen time.**
- **Bedtime and mealtimes.**
- **After school time.**



It's important to make a connection with your child's teacher this year

Your child's teacher will be a very important person in her life this year—so it's important for you to build a relationship. That way, you can work together to ensure your child's success.

Make every effort possible to attend back-to-school night. While you may not have time for a long talk with your child's teacher, you will both be able to put a name with a face.

Throughout the year, there may be things you want the teacher to know. Write a note, send an email or ask if the teacher can call you. The more she understands about your child, the more she'll be able to help her succeed.

And let your child know you respect the teacher. Your attitude will affect your child's behavior in class.



How can I help my child through a difficult time?

Q: Our family has been through a hard time. My husband lost his job and we moved to a new school district. These changes have been very hard for my child. How can I help her get a good start in her new school?

A: Your family is not alone. Many families are facing difficult economic times. But school can be a place where children feel safe and secure. You are wise to focus on helping your child settle in.

First, think through what you should tell the new school. It may be helpful for your child's teacher and school to know at least some of the story. You'll want them to be aware that she may display signs of stress. If you need help with school supplies or other basics, the school may be able to provide some support.

Next, find a way that you can get involved with your child's new school. Be sure to attend back-to-school night. Sign up for parent-teacher conferences when they are scheduled. If your schedule allows for it, offer to volunteer. Your child will feel more at home if she sees you there.

Finally, spend time with your child. Maintain family routines. This will help her stay positive, and that attitude will carry into her school work.



Are you promoting healthy habits?

Children who are overweight are at risk of developing health problems, such as heart disease and asthma, which could affect their ability to concentrate and achieve in school. Parents play a major role in preventing childhood obesity. Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

1. **Do you set** a healthy example? Snack on fruits and vegetables. Exercise regularly.
2. **Do you schedule** time so both you and your child exercise every day?
3. **Do you make sure** your child has breakfast? Kids who eat this meal are less likely to be overweight than those who skip it.
4. **Do you encourage** your child to help prepare meals? When they make a salad, they're more likely to eat it!

5. **Do you get** help from your child on chores? Doing them together is an easy way to build in some activity into his regular routine.

How did you do? Each yes means you are helping your child stay at a healthy weight. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve."

—Roger Lewin

Your habits can make your child a better reader

A parent's example teaches a powerful lesson. If you want your child to be a good reader, your own reading habits will make a huge impression. You can:

- **Show your child** how you read for information. Say, "I'm trying to find a new recipe for dinner tonight. I'm getting a lot of ideas from this cookbook."
- **Read for a purpose.** Do you take the bus in the morning? Show your child how you use the bus schedule.
- **Share something you're reading.** If there's an interesting story in the newspaper, read some of it aloud.

Working on a project builds parent-child communication

Working together is a great way for you and your child to find a relaxed time to talk. The key is to focus on communicating with your child. Together, you and your child might:

- **Cook.**
- **Volunteer.**
- **Build something.**



Boost responsibility to inspire confidence

Help your child learn responsibility by giving him a new job. This will remind him that he's capable, a trait that will carry over to school success. Remember to:

- **Pick a job** your child can handle. Match it to his abilities.
- **Encourage new challenges.** Now that your child has mastered this task, is there another he'd like to try?
- **Stay positive.** In the end, you'll both be proud of his accomplishments.

Source: L.A. Brown, "Back to school the perfect time for parents to give kids new responsibilities," The Toronto Star, <http://tinyurl.com/bbzbqdd>.

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