

# Elementary School Parents

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*make the difference!*



## Help your child bounce back and learn from mistakes

Mistakes are a part of life. It probably won't be long before your child makes one on a school assignment or test—and that's OK. What matters is how children and families respond to those mistakes.

Instead of criticizing or ignoring errors, help your child learn from them. Research shows that when students are encouraged to learn from their errors, they do better in school.

By fixing mistakes, children learn they can improve—that “smarts” aren't something they either have or they don't. Intelligence can be increased. And when students understand their errors and don't repeat them, they become more optimistic about their own ability to learn.

When reviewing schoolwork, first point out what your child did well.

Then, to help your student learn from mistakes:

- **Talk about them.** Rather than saying, “Don't worry—you'll do better on the next test,” ask if your child understands why the answers were wrong. If so, your child should correct them. If not, offer suggestions or encourage your child to ask the teacher for help.
- **Praise progress.** Did your child miss only two problems on the latest test? After reviewing mistakes, talk about how your student is improving. Paying attention to past mistakes—and correcting them—likely made a difference.

Source: H.S. Schroder and others, “Neural evidence for enhanced attention to mistakes among school-aged children with a growth mindset,” *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, Elsevier B.V.

## Boost your child's test performance



Regardless of how well students know the material before a test, they will benefit from know-

ing basic test-taking strategies.

During a test, encourage your elementary schooler to:

- **Read carefully.** This applies to the directions, questions and answers.
- **Ask the teacher** for clarification if the directions are confusing.
- **Manage time.** Your child should look over the questions and answer the easy ones first. Then, your student can go back to answer the more difficult questions. When stuck on a question, your child should make an educated guess and then move on.
- **Use the process** of elimination when answering multiple choice questions. Your child should read all of the answers and cross out the choices that don't make sense.
- **Answer all questions.** Blank answers won't earn points.
- **Use any extra time** to review all answers and check for careless mistakes.

# Reinforce learning by having your child teach you something



Students are more motivated to learn when they feel capable, connected and in control. Having your child teach

you things nurtures these feelings.

When children try to explain what they are doing, it can help them understand assignments better. It also reinforces what they know and reveals gaps in comprehension.

Try these strategies:

- **Show an interest** in what your child is learning in school. Ask your student to show you an assignment, teach you a concept or read a chapter from a textbook aloud.
- **Ask your child to help you** solve a problem or create something. What should you do first, second, next?

- **Let your child quiz you** about topics the class is studying. Take turns asking each other to define vocabulary words and recall math or science facts.
- **Ask your child to teach you** how to play a game. Then play it together.
- **Ask for your child's opinion** about something and consider it before making your own decision.

**"When children and parents talk regularly about school, children perform better academically."**

—National Education Association

# Six ways chores can help your child become more responsible



It's a fact: Responsible children do better in school. And they grow up to become productive, responsible adults.

One way to help children practice responsibility is through family chores.

Chores help your child:

1. **Build school skills.** Learning how to follow directions and complete chores correctly gives your child practice for following directions when taking tests.
2. **Feel needed.** Let's face it—this is something *everyone* needs. So be sure to recognize your child's contribution. "Elena unloaded the dishwasher this afternoon, so cleaning up after dinner tonight will be much faster!"
3. **Develop planning** and time management skills. Figuring out how to complete chores on time helps your child learn how to prioritize tasks and plan time appropriately.
4. **Feel a sense of investment.** A child who has swept the floor is less likely to track in mud from outdoors.
5. **Take pride in effort.** This feeling of satisfaction can carry over to times when your child is facing a daunting task for school, like finishing a long-term project or writing a research paper.
6. **Learn basic life skills.** Before leaving home, your child should know things like how to prepare simple meals, care for clothing, manage money and keep things clean. The sooner children learn these lessons, the more prepared they will be for the future.

# Are you preparing your child to make smart choices?



Decision-making is a key skill to work on with your child. When the time comes, you want your child to say *no* to negative

peer pressure and *yes* to positive things.

Are you doing all you can now to teach your student to make these wise choices? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you provide** plenty of opportunities to make decisions—and expect your child to live with the results of those choices?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you discuss** family decisions together? Do you brainstorm options and make decisions together?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you sometimes think** out loud when you are trying to make a decision?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you encourage your child** to ask questions and gather information before making a choice?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you teach your child** that every decision has consequences?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you're helping your child make better choices today and in the future. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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# Virtual field trips can spark your child's interest in STEM careers



On a virtual field trip, your child can “visit” museums, national parks, and even outer space! Experiences like these

boost interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)—and may even inspire your child to pursue a career in one of these in-demand fields.

During a virtual field trip, your elementary schooler can:

- **View museum exhibits.** Send your child on a self-guided tour of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History ([www.naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour](http://www.naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour)). The site provides 360-degree views of museum exhibits including dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures, modern-day animals, and gems and minerals. Help your

child read the exhibit signs to learn more about each artifact.

- **Visit national parks.** Climb down into an icy crevasse in Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska. Travel inside a volcano in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. The audio-guided virtual tours at [www.artsandculture.withgoogle.com/en-us/national-parks-service/parks](http://www.artsandculture.withgoogle.com/en-us/national-parks-service/parks) let you and your child navigate the wonders of five U.S. national parks.
- **Explore Mars.** Your child can see footage of the surface of Mars, recorded by NASA's Curiosity rover, at [www.accessmars.withgoogle.com](http://www.accessmars.withgoogle.com). Encourage your child to click on parts of the rover to learn about how it was engineered and how its technology works. Then your child can click on the map icon to visit mission sites.

# Regular exercise boosts your child's health and academics



Physical fitness provides many benefits for kids. Studies show that regular physical activity is linked to higher self-esteem and

attentiveness in classes. It also lowers the chance of health problems such as type 2 diabetes.

To increase your child's activity level:

- **Add movement to screen time.** Encourage your child to take breaks that involve activity when watching TV or playing video games.
- **Plan family outings.** Pick activities your family enjoys and create some new healthy traditions. You might go for a short walk before dinner every night, or take a hike every Sunday afternoon.

- **Play active games.** Encourage your child play games that involve movement, such as tag, soccer and jumping rope. Indoors, try games such as Simon Says and Red Light, Green Light.
- **Be creative.** During chore time, play music or race to finish a job. While doing errands, park a few blocks away from a store and walk. Or, make a quick stop at a playground on the way home.
- **Set an example.** Kids who see their family members staying fit (stretching, walking with a friend, etc.), are more likely to be active themselves.

Source: A. McPherson and others, “Physical activity, cognition and academic performance: an analysis of mediating and confounding relationships in primary school children,” BMC Public Health, BioMed Central.

**Q:** “I hate school” is my child's favorite thing to say lately, and I'm not sure how to respond. How can I get to the root of the problem so I can help?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Not all children who say they hate school actually hate it. Sometimes, they're just looking for attention—or for a chance to put off doing schoolwork.

However, if your child consistently says this, there could be something going on. Here's what to do:

1. **Have a discussion.** Wait for a time when your child is relatively calm and when you have time to talk. Then say, “You've said you hate school a few times. What's making you feel this way?”
2. **Identify the problem.** Listen closely to what your child says. Is your child struggling in a subject; feeling disconnected; or feeling overwhelmed?
3. **Help your child find solutions.** For example, if your child is struggling in a subject, recommend spending more time working on it each day. If your child is feeling overwhelmed, review your family schedule and make adjustments to give your child more free time.
4. **Remain positive.** Help your child see that nearly every situation has positives and negatives. By focusing on the positive, kids can change their entire outlook.
5. **Talk to your child's teacher.** Say how your child is feeling and ask for some suggestions and support. When families and teachers work together, students are more likely to succeed!



# It Matters: Schoolwork

## Help your child make schoolwork time effective



Don't let your elementary schooler's schoolwork cause headaches. Instead, set your child up for success. Try these ideas:

- **Remember what it's all about.** Schoolwork helps students practice what they're learning. Assignments and projects don't need to be perfect.
- **Make schoolwork a priority.** If your child can't finish work because of other activities, there is a problem. Adjust your child's schedule to allow enough time for your student to concentrate on assignments.
- **Show interest.** Don't hover while your child works, but ask questions to show you care. If your student is writing a report, for example, show enthusiasm. "You sure know a lot about Ancient Greece. Tell me more!"
- **Expect some frustration.** Your child shouldn't melt down over every assignment, but a little complaining is normal. Take it in stride. Just say that you believe your child can figure it out.
- **Encourage your student** to contact a classmate with any questions about an assignment. This shifts the responsibility away from you and onto your child—where it belongs.
- **Don't do the work for your child.** Not only is it wrong, it may make your student feel dumb. "Dad doesn't think I can handle this math assignment. I must not be very good at math."

## Understand the four reasons teachers give assignments

Understanding the goal behind an assignment can make it more rewarding—for students and parents. Teachers usually assign work for one of four reasons:

1. **Preparation.** Some assignments get your child ready for upcoming topics. If the teacher plans a lesson about the Civil War for instance, your child may be asked to read a passage about the period beforehand. Preparation assignments typically require reading or research.
2. **Practice.** Doing the same kind of work repeatedly—writing journal entries or solving similar math problems—reinforces your child's skills. This may sometimes seem tedious, but it works.
3. **Demonstration.** It's challenging for students to use different skills to show what they've learned. Projects such as preparing an oral report, writing a paper or putting



on a play encourage creativity and let students demonstrate their understanding of concepts.

4. **Extension.** This type of work involves applying knowledge to a new situation. Your child might be asked to compare and contrast two historic events, do a science experiment or solve a real-life problem.

## Encourage your child to pay close attention to graphics



Many students pay little or no attention to the images in their reading assignments. However, photos, maps, graphs and illustrations can give students a clearer idea of what a passage or chapter is about. They can also prompt students to think about any experiences they may have had with the subject.

Before beginning a reading assignment, have your child look at the

visuals and answer the following questions:

- **What do the graphics show? What details do you see?**
- **What do you think** this reading is about based on these graphics?
- **Why do you think** the authors included these graphics?

Once your child has studied the images, it's time to read. Now, your child is likely to understand more and remember more of the selection.