

Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



Encourage your child to do more than the bare minimum

It was a windy evening when Jack took the recycling to the curb. But instead of leaving it to blow around the neighborhood, he did something extra. He placed a rock on the papers so they would not become litter.

Jack had learned to do more than the bare minimum. It's a great lesson in responsibility—and it's something you can teach in your home.

For instance, you could ask your child to think about the following "extras" in the kitchen:

- **If he made a snack** after school, did he leave the kitchen ready for the next person?
- **If he used the last of the peanut butter**, did he tell someone to add it to the grocery list?
- **If he poured water** out of a pitcher, did he refill it? Or did he leave it empty for the next person?

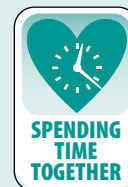
Those lessons will also help your child be successful in school. Instead of leaving his backpack where someone could trip over it, he'll place it in his cubby. Instead of turning in a sloppy report, he'll take the time to copy it neatly.

When it's time for a big project, some kids will wait until the last minute and do the very minimum. Others will go beyond what was expected. They'll include an illustration in their essay. They'll add a great cover to their report on Italy.

Help your child learn to do more than the minimum. By going beyond what's expected, he'll be a great success in school and in life.

Source: Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, *Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes In You and Your Kids!* ISBN: 0-87788-354-8 (WaterBrook Press, 719-590-4999, www.randomhouse.com/waterbrook).

Three ways you can find time to spend together



"What I really want that money can't buy is to see my mom and dad more." Those words, written by an 11-year-old child, could apply to children everywhere.

But when everyone is constantly on the go, how can parents find more time? Here are three ideas:

1. **Create kid-friendly routines.** Set aside time each day when you are just with your child. Walk her to the bus stop. Eat breakfast together. Tuck her in at night.
2. **Take a vacation day.** On one day when your child won't be in school, take a vacation day at work. Do something memorable together. Ride bikes. Visit a museum.
3. **Set aside time for fun.** Even on busy days, take time to play. Sing a silly song. Play a game of catch outside. Even just 10 minutes can make a big impression.

Source: Betsy Taylor, *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World*, ISBN: 0-4466-9189-5 (Grand Central Publishing, 1-800-759-0190 www.hachettebookgroupusa.com).

Try using 'if-then' statements for effective, consistent discipline



Kids are smart. They figure out just how long they can ignore what their parents say. They also know that the more parents talk, the more likely kids are able to wear them down until they finally just give up.

Instead of giving up, use "if-then" statements when you discipline your child. *If* your child does one thing, *then* something else will follow. But the key is to make sure that you follow through with what you say.

Instead of reminding your child to turn off the TV 15 times, say, "Jacob, *if* you don't turn off the TV, *then* I will turn it off and it will stay off for the rest of the day." When you turn off the TV and keep it off, your child will

learn that you mean what you say. That's why the *then* has to be something you will actually do. If you don't follow through with the consequence (even just once), your child won't take you seriously.

And remember that an "if-then" statement can be positive, too. "*If* you do your homework now, *then* we will have time to watch your favorite TV show after dinner."

Source: Ray Guarendi, *Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime*, ISBN: 1-56955-368-8 (Servant Books, a division of St. Anthony Messenger Press, 513-241-5615 www.servantbooks.org).

"A library should be like a pair of open arms."

— Roger Rosenblatt

Research suggests parents give their children 'food for thought'



Have you heard of the expression "food for thought"? Well, it turns out to be, quite literally, the truth.

Catherine Kraus, a dietitian at the University of Michigan, says the right foods really do feed the brain. "Childhood is a crucial time when bodies are growing and brains are developing," she says. "It's so important to fuel the body with good nutrition."

It starts with breakfast. Research shows that students who skip breakfast in the morning don't do as well in school as students who do eat breakfast.

What can you do? Keep whole grain cereals on hand. And always be prepared for a late morning with a

healthy breakfast that can be eaten on the way out the door.

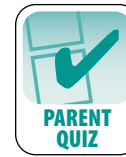
Whether you're packing lunch or your child is eating a school lunch, avoid high-calorie and high-fat foods. "When children consume a high-fat, high-sugar meal, their bodies will crash, and they will become very tired," Kraus says.

Of course your child is going to snack after school. So be sure to keep a variety of healthy snacks on hand—fruits and veggies, whole grain crackers, cheese and yogurt.

When you're grocery shopping, only buy food you want your child to eat. Your child can't eat unhealthy food if it is not in the house.

Source: Krista Hopson, "Eat Smart, Be Smart," University of Michigan, www2.med.umich.edu/prmc/media/newsroom/details.cfm.

Are you keeping your child healthy and in school?



The winter months are often times when kids get sick. Each year, millions of school days are lost because kids have colds

or the flu. You can keep your child (and the other kids in her class) from getting sick. Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

___ 1. I've taught my child to cover her cough by coughing into her bent elbow.

___ 2. I encourage regular hand washing. I also send hand sanitizer or wipes to school.

___ 3. I make sure my child gets plenty of sleep. Tired kids have a harder time fighting off germs.

___ 4. I have taught my child to avoid touching her eyes, nose and mouth. That's how germs are usually spread.

___ 5. I'll keep my child home if she does get the flu so it doesn't spread to other students.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your child fight winter illness. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Build strong thinking skills with thought-provoking questions



Talking with your child every day is a great way to build thinking skills—especially if you ask certain kinds of questions. Experts recognize six categories of thinking skills and suggest you ask your child questions that involve:

- 1. Knowledge.** Discuss facts your child knows. “Who is the president?” “What is the capital of Virginia?” Certain words will help with this, such as *who*, *when*, *what*, *where* and *list*.
- 2. Understanding.** When your child learns about things, check the depth of his comprehension. “Can you explain one cause of the Civil War?” Use words such as *explain*, *estimate* and *predict*.
- 3. Application.** In real-life situations, how will your child use what he knows? “Apply what our country learned from the Civil War to life

today? Include words like *apply* and *experiment* in your questions.

- 4. Analysis.** Often things can be divided into groups, such as types of animals. Have your child compare and contrast things. “How are fish and humans different?” Talk about *differences*, *similarities* and *comparisons*.
- 5. Combining.** Put information together to make observations. “Some flowers need lots of sun, and others don’t. So what does that tell us about plants?” Exciting words such as *invent* and *what if* will help with this.
- 6. Evaluating.** Ask what your child thinks about things. “How would life change if no one had invented cars?” Some useful words are *how*, *conclude* and *summarize*.

Source: Council for Exceptional Children, “Improving Your Child’s Thinking Skills,” FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/gifted-education/cognitivepsychology/38660.html>.

A television in your child’s room may result in lower test scores



If your child’s standardized tests scores are not what you’d hoped, the answer may lie in her bedroom.

One study of nearly 400 third graders found that kids with bedroom TVs got lower scores in math, reading and language arts. They scored seven points lower in reading. They scored eight points lower in math and language arts.

During the course of the study, some children added TVs to their bedrooms. They scored worst of all. Those who had TV sets taken out of their rooms saw their scores go up.

To Thomas Robinson, one of the authors of the study, the results are clear. “Educators and parents are looking for ways to improve children’s standardized test scores. This study suggests that something as logical and straightforward as taking TV sets out of kids’ bedrooms, or not putting them there in the first place, may be a solution.”

Source: Dina Borzekowski and Thomas Robinson, “The Remote, the Mouse, and the No. 2 Pencil: The Household Media Environment and Academic Achievement Among Third Grade Students,” Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/159/7/614>.

Q: My fifth-grade daughter has a pretty serious learning disability. She works very hard to keep up with the other kids academically. Unfortunately, her best friend goes to another school. Now she says one girl in her class has started teasing her whenever the teacher isn’t around. Mostly, they focus on her disability, calling her “dummy” or worse. Should I call the girl’s mother?

Questions & Answers

A: Fifth grade can be a challenging time for any girl. But your daughter seems to have a lot of challenges—probably too many for a kid to handle by herself.

Talking to the other girl’s mother is a pretty high-risk option. It could work. But it could also open your daughter to an even worse situation at school. Instead, you should:

- **Talk with her teacher.** Tell her you want to share information she needs to know. Be as specific as possible. Instead of saying, “The other girls are mean,” tell her exactly what they’ve said. If they’ve sent your daughter any notes or text messages, show her those as well.
- **Remain calm.** Don’t get angry or make threats. Ask your child’s teacher if she has talked with her students about the importance of treating others with respect. Ask her how she plans to handle the situation and to share the school’s policy regarding bullying with you.
- **Give your daughter** extra support while the school is taking action. Take her to see her best friend. Do things she enjoys. And hang in there. She’ll get through this, and so will you.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Reading

Spread reading materials around your home



According to experts, children have the most interest in reading when they live in homes where books are spread all around. Does this sound like your home?

The best way to get your child to pick up a book is to have lots of reading material within his reach. You can also:

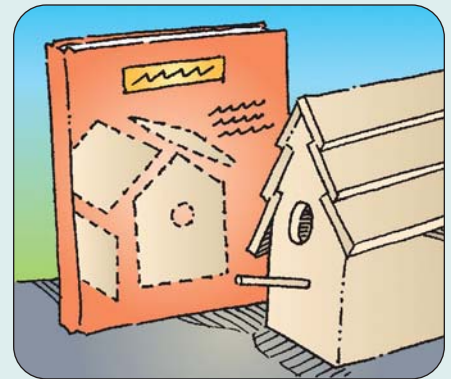
- **Let your child own** some books. It's important to check out books from the library. But owning books is nice, too. Help your child write his name inside each of his books. It may have a positive effect on his feelings about reading. You can find great deals on books at library fundraisers, yard sales and thrift stores.
- **Organize reading materials** in containers, such as baskets or magazine racks. These can fit in small spaces, such as next to beds, couches and tables. They can even go in the car. The more opportunities your child has to read, the better. Remember that books aren't the only option. Include magazines, comics and other items your child will like.
- **Make your child's bedroom** a special reading spot. Provide good lighting. At bedtime, say something like, "You're old enough to stay up 15 minutes longer to read. Or we can turn off the light at the same time as always. It's up to you." Your child will probably choose to read.

Source: Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, ISBN: 0-14-303739-0 (Penguin Books, 212-366-2000, www.penguin.com).

Motivate your child to read by turning it into an adventure

When kids like reading, they do more of it, and this boosts reading skills and school success. You can make reading fun if you:

- **Celebrate.** Instead of simply checking out books at the library, make an event of it. Choose a special place in the library to read together.
- **Explore.** Help your child find an appealing book series. She may not be able to resist picking up book after book.
- **Investigate.** Don't know what a word means? Have your child take a guess. Look it up together and see if she is right.
- **Play.** Take something you read and play a game. Summarize a story in three sentences. Predict

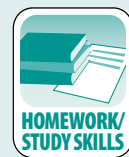


what will happen next. Use characters in a new story.

- **Experiment.** Try new kinds of books with your child. If she's used to reading fiction, have her try a biography or how-to book.

Source: "Reading Tips for Parents of Third Graders," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/7837.

Give your child tools when reading for a research project



By third grade, your child may have to do research projects that require plenty of reading, and he'll probably need help from you. You can't read for him, of course, but you can make his reading more productive.

To start:

- **Look at the research together.** Visit the library and find books about your child's topic. Practice using the table of contents, section headings and index. The glossary is a big help, too.
- **Introduce your child** to new resources. If he hasn't used a dictionary, atlas or encyclopedia before, this might be the time to

start. Talk about how information is presented, such as in alphabetical order.

- **Provide supplies** such as sticky notes or bookmarks to save pages. Use index cards for jotting down key information. Remind your child to notice how paragraphs begin. The first sentence often sums up the main point.
- **Supervise online research** and review how to use sources. For instance, it's not okay to "cut and paste" words into a project. Your child must put things in his own words and list his sources.

Source: Linda K. Rath, Ed.D., and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN: 0-06-051027-7 (HarperCollins, 1-800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com).