

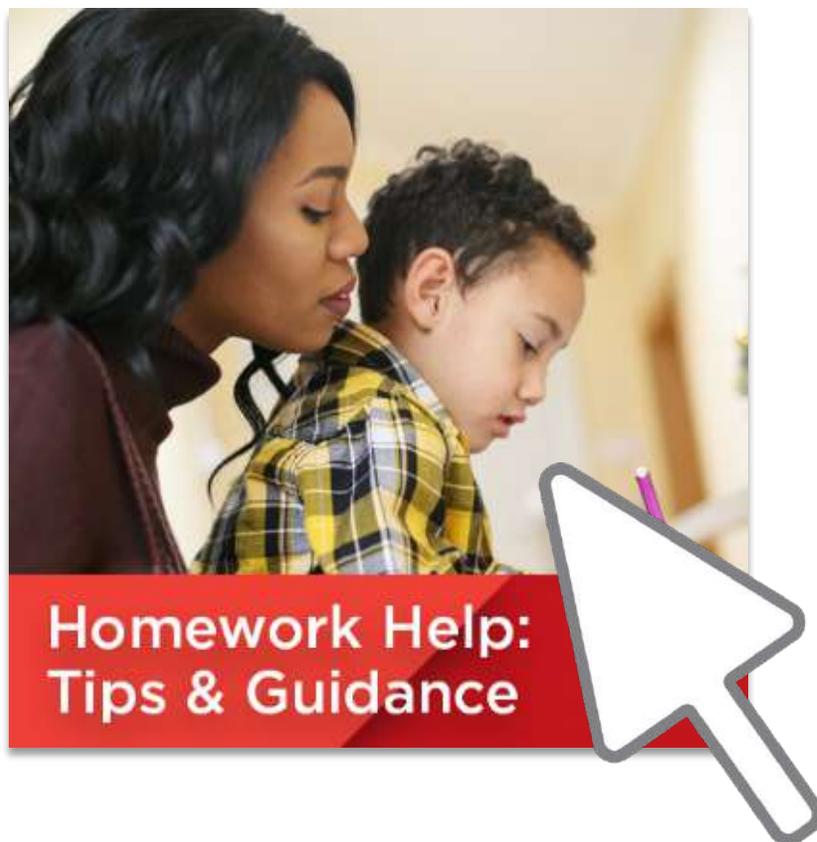
Parenting During COVID-19 Resource Guide

Reducing the effects of school closings,
shelter-in-place, and summer vacation
during COVID-19 parent resource guide

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How to Navigate this Document

This document is hyperlinked to make it easy to navigate. The structure and each of the sections has been designed so that you can enjoy the content in order or by jumping directly to a specific topic by simply clicking the icons on the menu page. Each of the resource pages is also linked within the documents so that you can go back to the top of the section, or back to the main menu by clicking the links at the bottom of the page. Each of the resource pages is color-coded so that each of the headings matches that resource page. We have also included a supplemental guide full of additional tips, recommendations, and other resources beyond the categories of the [menu page](#).



Main Menu



Information on
Corona for Parents



Homework Help:
Tips & Guidance



Helping Your
Child Learn



Helping Your
Child Succeed



Supporting the Middle
School Transition and
PBIS



Strategies for
Online Learning



Supplemental Resources & References

Information About COVID-19 for Parents

The Parent Homework Assistance During COVID-19 Resource Guide.

The section is the introduction, providing background and rationale for creating the resource guide and the overview outlining the structure of the document.

Theodore S. Ransaw

Introduction

In this parent resource we draw from credible sources including the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Communications and Outreach, as well as research-based sources from school-based practitioners and other appropriate sources. The resources have been organized into a single document with consistent formatting for the reader’s convenience. Each of the resources in this guide have the author and publication reference at the beginning of every section and at the end in the reference section.

Background

By now, most of us have heard of COVID-19 and are ready for it to be over so that all of us can get back to normal. Students, parents, and educators all around the world feel the same way. Governments worldwide temporarily closed education institutions, impacting over 60% of the world’s student population due to COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020). Here in the United States, the coronavirus pandemic almost forced a complete shutdown of school buildings in the spring of 2020. These closings have led to one of the most tumultuous and stressful K-12 schooling and higher education events in history (Education Week, 2020). U.S. school closures impacted at least 55.1 million students in 124,000 U.S. public and private schools. Nearly every state either ordered or recommended that schools remain closed through the end of the 2019-20 school year (Education Week, 2020). As you can imagine, the disruption of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our children. This Fall, America’s students will return to school with roughly only 70% of their learning gains in mathematics and approximately only 50% of their learning gains in reading (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020).

Historic Precedents

Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, and Greathouse (1996), are credited with the first impactful study of learning and loss over summer vacation. During summer break, many students experience learning losses. However, students from low Social Economic Status, SES families are more likely to have the most substantial reductions in learning by the time they return to school. Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, and Greathouse’s (1996), study resulted in the phrase summer slide to refer to the knowledge gap students may have when they return to school after summer break. Research on learning loss during the summer slide can offer “some insights that can help educators, policymakers, and families understand, plan for, and address some potential impacts of this extended pause in classroom instruction when students return to school” [after COVID-19] (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, p. 12, 2020).

[Back to Top](#)

[Back to Menu](#)

Strategies

Kuhfeld & Tarasawa (2020) attest that three consistent trends lead to the summer slide, 1, achievement typically slows or declines over the summer months, 2, declines tend to be steeper for math than for reading, and 3, that losses increase in the upper grades. Quinn and Polikoff (2017), suggest that closing the digital divide, providing math support to students during disruption and copious use of data are ways that educators can reduce the effects of the summer slide. Many families are at risk of being left technologically behind if they do not have access to broadband required to download and upload homework assignments. The summer break seems to be most detrimental for math than for reading and spelling, as there appears to be more access and availability to reading. And while middle-class students tend to have gains over the summer, limited access to libraries and museums over the summer may see flat or decreased learning across all SES levels (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay & Greathouse, 1996). Kin and White (2011) caution us to remember that although children who pick out their books may be more motivated to read over the summer, they run a chance of choosing books that are too far above or too far below their reading level leading to no positive gains or just plain frustration. Providing students with books that matched their interests and reading levels as well as providing fluency and comprehension strategies are the most successful strategies over summer break. Parents can assist in this. Additionally, Alexander, Entwisle and Olson (2001) assert that students from low SES neighborhoods are less likely to be able to access libraries and museums during the summer recess. The COVID-19 slide also affects the closing and limited access to students. Low SES students start the following year even farther behind students who attend school in more affluent neighborhoods. Research also suggests that students will return to school with learning losses after the COVID-19 slide (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020).

Practical Solutions

If you are a parent looking for practical solutions about how to help your child close the COVID Slide or general homework assistance here below are a few resources.

What's Inside

The resource guide begins with a *How to Navigate this Document* paragraph. We follow with *Information on Coronavirus for Parents* section that contains background information behind the reason for making the resource guide. *Helping Your Child Learn* has four resources. The first, *Helping Your Child Become a Reader* details reading strategies that parents can use to foster literacy. Secondly, *Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics* has practical tips to boost your child's math competency. Third, *Helping Your Child Learn Science* lists a few strategies to engage beginning scientists with a real-world example and tips for high-school biology students. Fourth, *Helping Your Child Learn History*, includes practical tips to help your child learn from the past. The *Homework Help: Tips and Guidance* section offers parents just enough information to get their feet wet, so to speak, when you are looking for a place to start supporting your child. The section moves on to provide grade school and a middle school/high school homework assistance tips. *Strategies for Online Learning* offers parent advice and strategies to support your child as well as student advice for taking online classes. *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, shares brief suggestions to help your child make the most of school. The next resource, *Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen*, presents concepts that will help your child get along better with other students and teachers and become a more productive person. The *Supporting the Middle School Transition and Positive Behavioral Interventions and*

[Back to Top](#)

[Back to Menu](#)

Support, section gives general concepts about different reading and studying approaches necessary for high school success, and a parent-friendly guide that provides parents with supplemental knowledge of the most common school behavioral intervention programs. The *Tips and Strategies for Online Learning* section is a brief guide that discusses barriers to on-line learning for children and children with disabilities. The *Supplemental Resources* section includes engaging instructional video links, recommended books for engaging boys and empowering girls in literacy, recommended books for parents and caretakers. We conclude with a *References* section. Again, please note that all of the resources in this guide have the author and publication information listed at the top of each resource and in the references section at the end of the guide. The resources have been organized into a single document with consistent formatting for the reader's convenience.

References

Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Butlw, L. S. (2001). Schools, achievement, and inequality: A seasonal perspective. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25, 171–191.

Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J. & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on Achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3) 227-268.

Education Week. (2020, May). Map: Coronavirus and school closures. Retrieved at: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>.

Kim, J., S., & White, T., G., (2011, April). Solving the problem of summer reading loss. Happanmagazine.org.

Kuhfeld, M, & Tarasawa, B. (2020, April). *The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement*. Portland, OR: The Collaborative for Student Growth at NWEA.

Quinn, D., & Polikoff, M. (2017). *Summer learning loss: What is it, and what can we do about it*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/summer-learning-loss-what-is-it-and-what-can-we-do-about-it/>

UNESCO 9. (2020) *Education: From disruption to recovery*. Retrieved at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

Homework Help: Tips & Guidance

This section is intended to provide a few brief suggestions and more detailed strategies to help your child with homework. It is more expository in nature and has several concepts that overlap that highlights the importance of supporting children with homework assistance.



[Back to Menu](#)

Helping Your Child with Homework: Quick Tips

National Educational Psychological Service. (2015). *Homework tips for parents if children in primary school*. Dublin, Ireland: National Educational Psychological Service.

Rosenfelt, P., McGrath, J. Bogg, L., Cuffey, L., Jaspert C., Smalley, E., Short, A., Zimmermann, J. (2003). *Homework Tips for parents*. Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Education, Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, Educational Partnerships and Family Involvement Unit

Make sure the child is not hungry or very tired when starting on homework. Provide a snack and or rest before expecting the child to start homework.

Have a specific time and place for homework. Stick to this routine consistently and explain it to the child. If necessary, use the clock to show how long the homework will take. The setting should be quiet. TV/Playstation etc should be switched off. Ensure your child has all the necessary books and equipment before beginning.

Try and remain calm and positive with your child.

Praise and encourage your child throughout the homework session. For children with attention/reading difficulties, consider breaking homework into chunks with brief movement breaks.

Have a pre-written alphabet and number line (on card) and if necessary, attach it to the table. Provide counters/money for math work where necessary.

For writing exercises, if child is becoming frustrated write the beginning of the sentence and encourage him/her to finish or write some words and encourage him/her to fill in the blanks. If your child is struggling to read a sentence, give them the word and move on.

Keep the teacher informed of difficulties that your child may be having with homework, particularly if the homework seems to take a long time or if the child often has difficulty in a particular subject area. Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child to succeed*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center.

Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework. Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.

Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available. Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.

Help your child with time management. Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend

morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.

Be positive about homework. Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.

When your child does homework, you do homework. Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.

When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.

When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it. Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.

If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away. Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.

Stay informed. Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.

Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework. Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.

Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration. Let your child take a short break if she is having trouble keeping her mind on an assignment.

Reward progress in homework. If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park) to reinforce the positive effort.

READING HOMEWORK TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Have your child read aloud to you every night.
- Choose a quiet place, free from distractions, for your child to do his nightly reading assignments.
- As your child reads, point out spelling and sound patterns such as *cat*, *pat*, *hat*.
- When your child reads aloud to you and makes a mistake, point out the words she has missed and help her to read the word correctly.
- After your child has stopped to correct a word he has read, have him go back and reread the entire sentence from the beginning to make sure he understands what the sentence is saying.
- Ask your child to tell you in her own words what happened in a story.
- To check your child's understanding of what he is reading, occasionally pause and ask your child questions about the characters and events in the story.
- Ask your child why she thinks a character acted in a certain way and ask your child to support her answer with information from the story.
- Before getting to the end of a story, ask your child what he thinks will happen next and why.

MATH HOMEWORK TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Encourage your child to use a daily math assignment book.
- Follow the progress your child is making in math. Check with your child daily about his homework.
- If you don't understand your child's math assignments, engage in frequent communication with his or her teacher.
- If your child is experiencing problems in math, contact the teacher to learn whether he or she is working at grade level and what can be done at home to help improve academic progress.
- Request that your child's teacher schedule after-school math tutoring sessions if your child really needs help.
- Advocate with the principal for the use of research-based peer tutoring programs for math. These tutoring programs have proven results, and students really enjoy them.
- Use household chores as opportunities for reinforcing math learning such as cooking and repair activities.
- Try to be aware of how your child is being taught math, and don't teach strategies and shortcuts that conflict with the approach the teacher is using.
- Check in with the teacher and ask what you can do to help. Ask the teacher about online resources that you can use with your child at home.
- At the beginning of the year, ask your child's teacher for a list of suggestions that will enable you to help your child with math homework.

Helping Your Child with Homework

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping Your Child with Homework*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach.

Why Do Teachers Assign Homework?

Teachers assign homework for many reasons. Homework can help their students with the following:

- Review and practice what they've covered in class;
- Get ready for the next day's class;
- Learn to use resources, such as libraries, reference materials and computer Web sites to find information about a subject;
- Explore subjects more fully than classroom time permits;
- Extend learning by applying skills they already have to new situations; and
- Integrate their learning by applying many different skills to a single task, such as book reports or science projects.

Homework also can help students to develop good study habits and positive attitudes by:

- Teaching them to work independently; and
- Encouraging self-discipline and responsibility (assignments provide some children with their first chance to manage time and to meet deadlines).

In addition, homework can help create greater understanding between families and teachers and provide opportunities for increased communication. Monitoring homework keeps families informed about what their children are learning and about the policies and programs of the teacher and the school.

Does Homework Help Children Learn?

Homework helps your child do better in school when the assignments are meaningful, are completed successfully and are returned to her ^[***] with constructive comments from the teacher. An assignment should have a specific purpose, come with clear instructions, be fairly well matched to a child's abilities and help to develop a child's knowledge and skills.

In the early grades, homework can help children to develop the good study habits and positive attitudes described earlier. From *third through sixth grades*, small amounts of homework, gradually increased each year, may support improved school achievement. In *seventh grade and beyond*, students who complete more homework score better on standardized tests and earn better grades, on the average, than do students who do less homework. The difference in test

scores and grades between students who do more homework and those who do less increases as students move up through the grades.

What's the Right Amount of Homework?

The right amount of homework depends on the age and skills of the child. National organizations of parents and teachers suggest that children in *kindergarten through second grade* can benefit from 10 to 20 minutes of homework each school day. In *third through sixth grades*, children can benefit from 30 to 60 minutes a school day. In *seventh through ninth* grades, students can benefit from spending more time on homework and the amount may vary from night to night.

Amounts that vary from these guidelines are fine for some children and in some situations. For example, because reading at home is especially important for children, reading assignments might push the time on homework a bit beyond the amounts suggested here.

If you are concerned that your child has either too much or too little homework, talk with his teacher and learn about her homework policies.

→ How to Help: Show That You Think Education and Homework Are Important

Children need to know that their family members think homework is important. If they know their families care, children have a good reason to complete assignments and to turn them in on time. You can do many things to show that your child that you value education and homework.

Set a Regular Time for Homework

Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments. The best schedule is one that works for your child and your family. What works well in one household may not work in another. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age as well as her specific needs. For instance, one child may do homework best in the afternoon, completing homework first or after an hour of play and another may do it best after dinner. However, don't let your child leave homework to do just before bedtime.

Your child's outside activities, such as sports or music lessons, may mean that you need a flexible homework schedule. Your child may study after school on some days and after dinner on others. If there isn't enough time to finish homework, your child may need to drop some outside activity. Let her know that homework is a high priority.

You'll need to work with your elementary school child to develop a schedule. An older student can probably make up a schedule independently, although you'll want to make sure that it's a workable one. You may find it helpful to write out his schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often, such as on the refrigerator door.

Some families have a required amount of time that their children must devote to homework or some other learning activities each school night (the length of time can vary depending upon the child's age). For instance, if your seventh grader knows she's expected to spend an hour doing homework, reading or visiting the library, she may be less likely to rush through assignments so that she can watch TV. A required amount of time may also discourage her from "forgetting" to bring home assignments and help her adjust to a routine.

Pick a Place

Your child's homework area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice, but for many children, the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine. The area should have good lighting and it should be fairly quiet.

Your child may enjoy decorating a special area for homework. A plant, a brightly colored container to hold pencils and some favorite artwork taped to the walls can make homework time more pleasant.

Remove Distractions

Turn off the TV and discourage your child from making and receiving social telephone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment, however, may be helpful.)

Some children work well with quiet background music, but loud noise from the CD player, radio or TV is not OK. One history teacher laments, "I've actually had a kid turn in an assignment that had written in the middle, 'And George Washington said, "Ohhhhh, I love you."' The kid was so plugged into the music that he wasn't concentrating."

If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions can't be avoided, your child may want to complete assignments in the local library.

Provide Supplies and Identify Resources

Have available pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper and a dictionary. Other supplies that might be helpful include a stapler, paper clips, maps, a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, glue, paste, scissors, a ruler, a calculator, index cards, a thesaurus and an almanac. If possible, keep these items together in one place. If you can't provide your child with needed supplies, check with her teacher, school guidance counselor or principal about possible sources of assistance.

For books and other information resources, such as suitable computer Web sites, check with the school library or your local public library. Some libraries have homework centers designed especially to assist children with school assignments (they may even have tutors and other kinds of individual assistance).

You may want to ask your child's teacher to explain school policy about the use of computers for homework. Certainly, computers are great learning and homework tools. Your child can use her computer not only for writing reports and for getting information through Internet resource sites, but for "talking" with teachers and classmates about assignments. In many schools, teachers post information about homework assignments and class work on their own Web sites, which also may have an electronic bulletin board on which students can post questions for the teacher and others to answer. (For more information about using the Internet, see the U.S. Department of Education's booklet, *Parents' Guide to the Internet*, listed in the Resources section, page.)

However, you don't have to have a computer in your home for your child to complete homework

assignments successfully. Some schools may offer after-school programs that allow your child to use the school computers. And many public libraries make computers available to children.

Set a Good Example

Show your child that the skills he is learning are an important part of the things he will do as an adult. Let him see you reading books, newspapers and computer screens; writing reports, letters, e-mails and lists; using math to balance your checkbook or to measure for new carpeting; doing other things that require thought and effort. Tell your child about what you do at work.

Help your child to use every day routines to support the skills he is learning—for example, teach him to play word and math games; help him to look up information about things in which he is interested—singers, athletes, cars, space travel and so forth; and talk with him about what he sees and hears as the two of you walk through the neighborhood, go shopping at the mall or visit a zoo or museum.

Be Interested and Interesting

Make time to take your child to the library to check out materials needed for homework (and for enjoyment) and read with your child as often as you can. Talk about school and learning activities in family conversations. Ask your child what was discussed in class that day. If she doesn't have much to say, try another approach. For example, ask her to read aloud a story she wrote or to talk about what she found out from a science experiment.

Attend school activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, plays, concerts, open houses and sports events. If you can, volunteer to help in your child's classroom or at special events. Getting to know some of your child's classmates and their parents builds a support network for you and your child. It also shows your child that his home and school are a team

→How to Help: Monitor Assignments

Children are more likely to complete homework successfully when parents monitor their assignments. How closely you need to monitor your child depends upon her age, how independent she is and how well she does in school. Whatever the age of your child, if she is not getting assignments done satisfactorily, she requires more supervision.

Here are some ways to monitor your child's assignments.

Ask about the School's Homework Policy

At the start of the school year, ask your child's teacher about any rules or guidelines that children are expected to follow as they complete homework. Ask about the kinds of assignments that will be given and the purposes for the assignments.

Talk with the teacher about your role in helping with homework. Expectations for parent involvement vary from teacher to teacher. Some teachers want parents to monitor homework closely, whereas others want them simply to check to make sure the assignment is completed on time.

Ask the teacher to call if any problems with homework come up. Let her know that you will do the same.

Be Available

Many elementary school students often like to have someone with them to answer questions as they work on assignments. If your child is cared for by someone else, talk to that caregiver about how to deal with homework. For an older child, if no one will be around, let him know when you want him to begin work and call to remind him if necessary.

However, if the teacher has made it known that students are to do homework on their own, limit your assistance to your child to assuring that assignments are clear and that necessary supplies are provided. Too much parent involvement can make children dependent-and takes away from the value of homework as a way for children to become independent and responsible.

Look over Completed Assignments

It's usually a good idea to check to see that your elementary school child has finished her assignments. If your middle-school student is having trouble finishing assignments, check his work, too. After the teacher returns completed homework, read the comments to see if your child has done the assignment satisfactorily.

Monitor Time Spent Viewing TV and Playing Video Games

American children on average spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework. In many homes, more homework gets done when TV viewing and "game" time is limited.

Once you and your child have worked out a homework schedule, take time to discuss how much TV and what programs she can watch. It's worth noting that television can be a learning tool. Look for programs that relate to what your child is studying in school, such as programs on history or science or dramatizations of children's literature. When you can, watch shows with your child, discuss them and encourage follow-up activities such as reading or a trip to the museum.

Likewise, limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with TV programs, be aware of the games she likes to play and discuss her choices with her.

→How to Help: Provide Guidance

The basic rule is, "Don't do the assignments yourself." It's not your homework—it's your child's. "I've had kids hand in homework that's in their parents' handwriting," one eighth-grade teacher complains. Doing assignments for your child won't help him understand and use information. And it won't help him become confident in his own abilities.

Here are some ways that you can provide guidance without taking over your child's homework.

Help Your Child Get Organized

Help your child to make a schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often. Writing out assignments will get him used to the idea of keeping track of what's due and when. If your child is not yet able to write, write it for him until he can do it himself.

A book bag or backpack will make it easier for your child to carry homework to and from school. Providing homework folders in which your child can tuck his assignments for safekeeping also can help him to stay organized.

Encourage Good Study Habits

Teachers generally give students tips on how to study. But it takes time and practice to develop good study habits. To reinforce good habits at home, you can:

- **Help your child manage time to complete assignments.** For example, if your eighth grader has a biology report due in three weeks, discuss all the steps she needs to take to complete it on time, including:
 1. Selecting a topic;
 2. Doing the research by looking up books and other materials on the topic and taking notes;
 3. Figuring out what questions to discuss;
 4. Drafting an outline;
 5. Writing a rough draft; and
 6. Revising and completing the final draft.
- **Encourage your child to make a chart that shows how much time she expects to spend on each step.**
- **Help your child to get started when he has to do research reports or other big assignments.** Encourage him to use the library. If he isn't sure where to begin, tell him to ask the librarian for suggestions. If he's using a computer for online reference resources—whether the computer is at home, school or the library—make sure he's getting whatever help he needs to use it properly and to find age-appropriate Web sites. Many public libraries have homework centers with tutors or other kinds of one-on-one assistance. After your child has completed the research, listen as he tells you the points he wants to make in the report.
- **Give practice tests.** Help your third grader prepare for a spelling test by saying the words as she writes them. Have her correct her own test as you spell each word.
- **Help your child avoid last-minute cramming.** Review with your fifth grader how and what to study for his social studies test long before it's to be given. You can have him

work out a schedule of what he needs to do to, make up a practice test and write down answers to the questions he's made up.

- **Talk with your child about how to take a test.** Be sure she understands how important it is to read the instructions carefully, to keep track of the time and to avoid spending too much time on any one question. (See the [Resources](#) section for the titles of books and pamphlets that give more tips on how your child can get organized and develop good study habits.)

Talk about the Assignments

Talking and asking questions can help your child to think through an assignment and break it down into small, manageable parts. Here are some questions to ask.

- **Do you understand what you're supposed to do?** After your child has read the instructions, ask her to tell you in her own words what the assignment is about. (If she can't read yet, the teacher may have sent home instructions that you can read to her.) Some schools have homework hotlines that you can call or Web sites that you can access by computer for assignments in case your child misplaced a paper or was absent on the day it was given. If your child doesn't understand the instructions, read them with her and talk about the assignment. Does it have words that she doesn't know? How can she find out what the words mean? If neither you nor your child understands an assignment, call one of her classmates or get in touch with the teacher.
- **Do you need help in understanding how to do this assignment?** See if your child needs to learn more, for example, about subtracting fractions before she can do her assignment. Or find out if the teacher needs to explain to her again when to use different kinds of punctuation marks. If you understand the subject yourself, you may want to work through some examples with your child. However, always let her do the assignment herself.
- **Do you have everything you need to do the assignment?** Sometimes your child needs special supplies, such as colored pencils, metric rulers, calculators, maps or reference books. Check with the teacher, school guidance counselor or principal for possible sources of assistance if you can't provide the needed supplies. Check with your local library or school library for books and other information resources.
- **Does your answer make sense to you?** To check that your child understands what he is doing, ask him to explain how he solved a math problem or have him summarize what he has written in a report.

Watch for Frustration

If your child shows signs of frustration, let him take a break. Encourage him and let him see that you know he can do the work.

Give Praise

People of all ages respond to praise. And children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most—their families. "Good first draft of your book report!" or "You've done a great job" can go a long way toward motivating your child to complete assignments.

Children also need to know when they haven't done their best work. Make criticism constructive, however. Instead of telling a sixth grader, "You aren't going to hand in that mess, are you?" say, "The teacher will understand your ideas better if you use your best handwriting." Then give praise when the child finishes a neat version.

→How to Help: Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems

Homework problems often can be avoided when families and caregivers value, monitor and guide their children's work on assignments. Sometimes, however, helping in these ways is not enough. If you have problems, here are some suggestions for how to deal with them.

Tell the Teacher about Your Concerns

You may want to contact the teacher if:

- Your child refuses to do her assignments, even though you've tried hard to get her to do them;
- The instructions are unclear;
- You can't seem to help your child get organized to finish the assignments;
- You can't provide needed supplies or materials;
- Neither you nor your child can understand the purpose of the assignments;
- The assignments are too hard or too easy;
- The homework is assigned in uneven amounts—for instance, no homework is given on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, but on Thursday four assignments are made that are due the next day; or
- Your child has missed school and needs to make up assignments.

In some cases, the school guidance counselor or principal also may be helpful in resolving problems.

Work with the Teacher

Continuing communication with teachers is very important in solving homework problems. As you work with your child's teacher, here are some important things to remember:

- **Talk with each of your child's teachers early in the school year.** Get acquainted before problems arise and let each teacher know that you want to be kept informed. Most elementary and middle schools hold regular parent-teacher conferences or open houses. If

your child's school doesn't provide such opportunities, call the teacher to set up a meeting.

- **Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect your child has a homework problem** (as well as when you think he's having any major problems with his schoolwork). Schools have a responsibility to keep you informed about your child's performance and behavior and you have a right to be upset if you don't find out until report-card time that your child is having difficulties. On the other hand, you may figure out that a problem exists before the teacher does. By alerting the teacher, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages.
- **Request a meeting with the teacher to discuss homework problems.** Tell him briefly why you want to meet. You might say, "Rachel is having trouble with her math homework. I'm worried about why she can't finish the problems and what we might do to help her." If English is your second language, you may need to make special arrangements, such as including in the meeting someone who is bilingual.
- **Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit.** Believe that the teacher wants to help you and your child, even if you disagree about something. Don't go to the principal without giving the teacher a chance to work out the problem with you and your child.
- **Let the teacher know whether your child finds the assignments too hard or too easy.** (Teachers also like to know when their students are particularly excited about an assignment.) Of course, not all homework assignments can be expected to interest your child and be perfectly suited to her. Teachers just don't have time to tailor homework to the individual needs of each student. However, most teachers want to assign homework that their students can complete successfully and they welcome feedback.

Many teachers structure homework so that a wide range of students will find assignments interesting. For example:

- They offer students options for different approaches to the same topic or lesson;
 - They give extra assignments to students who want more challenge; and
 - They give specialized assignments to students who are having trouble in a particular area.
- **During your meeting with the teacher, explain what you think is going on.** In addition, tell the teacher if you don't know what the problem is. Sometimes a student's version of what's going on isn't the same as the teacher's version. For example, your child may tell you that the teacher never explains assignments so that he can understand them. But the teacher may tell you that your child isn't paying attention when assignments are given.
 - **Work out a way to solve or lessen the problem.** The strategy will depend on what the problem is, how severe it is and what the needs of your child are. For instance:

- Is the homework often too hard? Maybe your child has fallen behind and will need extra help from the teacher or a tutor to catch up.
- Does your child need to make up a lot of work because of absences? The first step might be working out a schedule with the teacher.
- Does your child need extra support beyond what home and school can give her? Ask the teacher, school guidance counselor or principal if there are mentor programs in your community. Mentor programs pair a child with an adult volunteer who assists with the child's special needs. Many schools, universities, community organizations, churches and businesses offer excellent mentoring programs.
- **Make sure that communication is clear.** Listen to the teacher and don't leave until you're sure that you understand what's being said. Make sure, too, that the teacher understands what you have to say. If, after the meeting, you realize you don't understand something, call the teacher to clarify.

At the end of the meeting, it may help to summarize what you've agreed to do:

"OK, so to keep track of Kim's assignments, I'll check her assignment book each night and write my initials beside new assignments. Each day you'll check to make sure she's written down all new assignments in her book. That way we'll be certain that I know what her assignments are."

Follow up to make sure that the approach you agreed to is working. If the teacher told you, for example, that your child needs to spend more time practicing long division, check back in a month to talk about your child's progress.

Homework can bring together children, families, and teachers in a common effort to improve children's learning.

Helping your child with homework is an opportunity to improve your child's chances of doing well in school and life. By helping your child with homework, you can help him learn important lessons about discipline and responsibility. You can open up lines of communication—between you and your child and you and the school. You are in a unique position to help your child make connections between schoolwork and the "real world," and thereby bring meaning (and some enjoyment) to your child's homework experience.

Homework: A Guide for Parents

Dawson, P. (2010). *Homework: A guide for parents*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Key Messages About Homework

There are three key messages about homework that parents need to give their children:

- **Homework is an important part of school.** Expect children to complete homework and hand it in when it is due. Holding children accountable for homework builds responsibility and time management skills.
- **Parental support will be provided as needed.** Some children are genuinely overwhelmed by homework, either because they find it too difficult or because they don't know how to work on their own. However, children are less likely to become discouraged or frustrated when parents offer encouragement and assure them that help is available when they get stuck. For some children, it is helpful just to have a parent nearby while they work.
- **Parents will not do homework for their children.** This message lets children know that the parent role is to encourage and to help them get unstuck, while at the same time communicating that homework is designed to help children master skills that parents already attained.

Strategies for Supporting Homework

Beyond these messages, there are important ways parents can help children with homework:

- **Check in with your children every day.** Studies show that students who have parental assistance in completing homework spend more time on homework. Parents can help motivate their children and give them strategies for sustaining attention and combating the negative emotions often associated with homework. While some children, particularly as they get older, resist help or supervision from parents, minimally parents can ask them about homework and plans for completing it. “What do you have to do and when are you going to do it?” should be a daily mantra for parents as they help their children plan for homework.
- **Establish clear homework routines.** Tasks are easiest to accomplish when they are tied to specific routines. By establishing daily routines for homework completion, parents will not only make homework go more smoothly, but they will also foster a sense of order that children can apply to later life, including college and work. Setting up homework routines early in elementary school can build habits that will make it easier for children to adjust to the greater homework demands that middle school and high school present. The steps to establishing homework routines include:
 1. Identify a location where homework will be done.

2. Make sure children have all the materials needed to complete homework assignments (e.g., pencils, erasers, paper, dictionary, calculator).
 3. Decide on the best time to do homework (e.g., right after school, just before or after dinner).
 4. Make plans for completing homework (i.e., list all the tasks to be accomplished, identify when children will begin each task, and have your children estimate how long it will take to complete each task).
- **Supervise but don't micromanage.** Some children will need more help with homework than others, but a general rule of thumb is provide the minimum help necessary for the child to be successful. In other words, parents should do no more than is necessary for their children to succeed—but they should do enough to ensure success. If you feel you are doing your child's work for her because it's the only way she can succeed, you should talk with your child's teacher about modifying the work so the child does not require as much support at home.
 - **Help children establish and maintain organizational systems.** Help your children keep workspaces neat and set up systems to keep track of homework assignments. Homework sessions should end with children:
 - Placing the homework in the appropriate folder or notebook and backpack.
 - Cleaning off the desk or workspace so that the next homework session can begin in an orderly environment.
 - Parents may need to supervise their children during this phase of the homework routine, even after they have learned to do their homework by themselves.
 - Look for others to help. Homework can be time consuming for both parents and children.

Parents may find it helpful to take turns supervising homework, alternating by nights or by subject matter. They may also be able to enlist the support of other family members, including grandparents and older siblings. Some children are more cooperative working with other kids rather than adults, and parents may find it helpful to hire a high school student or pay an older sibling to supervise homework sessions.

- **Use incentives if necessary.** For children who are not motivated by grades, parents may need to look for other rewards to help them get through their nightly homework routine. Incentive systems fall into two categories: simple and elaborate. Simple incentive systems include:
 - Giving children something to look forward to once homework is complete

- Building in breaks along the way (either after a set period of time or after a set amount of work is accomplished)
- Building in choice, such as the order in which they will complete tasks or the schedule they will follow

Elaborate incentive systems involve more planning and more work on the part of parents, but in some cases are necessary to address more significant homework problems. These systems work best when parents and children develop them together. Allowing children to have input gives them a sense of control and ownership, making the system more likely to succeed. Steps to follow in creating a more formal incentive system include:

1. Describe the problem behaviors (e.g., putting off homework until the last minute, complaining at length about homework, etc.).
 2. Set a goal (e.g., completing all homework by 7 p.m., complaining no more than once per night about homework).
 3. Decide on possible rewards or penalties (e.g., the chance to watch a favorite television show or play video games).
 4. Write a homework contract, identifying what everyone will do (parents and children) to carry out their part of the agreement.
- **Establish clear communication channels with teachers.** For some students, this may take the form of a notebook going back and forth between home and school, or having both parents and teachers sign off on assignment books to ensure children are adequately supervised at home and at school. For most students, this level of communication will not be required, but parents should take advantage of school open houses and parent–teacher conferences, not only to understand the teacher’s homework policies and practices but also as ways to communicate to their children that they consider homework an important part of their education.
 - **Work with school personnel to establish necessary supports within the school.** Parents alone cannot solve all homework problems. When students do not understand the assignment or lack the skills or knowledge to complete it, parents will have to reach out to teachers for assistance. Some students have trouble remembering to write down assignments, bring home all necessary materials, and/or hand in homework; some have trouble remembering due dates.

Often, parents and teachers assume that children are being willful in forgetting assignments or failing to bring home necessary materials. Rewards or punishments alone will not likely resolve the problem. While either may be an appropriate place to start, they are often insufficient for youngsters with attention or working memory deficits. Cues and supports need to be provided within the school setting.

Students who have difficulty remembering homework assignments benefit from:

- Teachers who establish clear homework routines
- Supervision each day to be sure they have handed in all the homework from the night before, have written down new assignments, and bring home necessary materials
- Working with a coach to help develop planning, time and task management skills, and organizational skills necessary to stay on top of assignments

If failure to complete homework consistently results in failing grades or grades well below the student's potential, it might be helpful to arrange for after-school help from teachers, tutoring either through the school or privately, or referral to a teacher assistance team or to special education if it appears that an educational disability may be the underlying cause of homework difficulties. If a student has a disability, homework supports should be built into IEPs or 504 plans.

ADAPTATIONS AND FURTHER SUPPORT

Suggestions provided in this handout will need to be adapted to the particular age of the child. Parents need to provide greater supervision and involvement with children during the elementary school years, while by high school, most parents find they can pull back and let their children take more responsibility for their homework schedules. Middle school is often the turning point, and parents will need to make decisions about their level of involvement in homework based on the developmental level and academic needs of their children. At any age, if problems arise that seem intractable, parents should consult their child's teacher or a school psychologist.

Helping Your Child Learn

This section introduces learning strategies parents can use to support children with homework based on broad content subjects such as reading, mathematics, science, and history.



**Helping Your Child
Become a Reader**



**Helping Your Child
Learn Mathematics**



**Helping Your Child
Learn Science**



**Helping Your Child
Learn History**

Helping Your Child Become a Reader

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child become a reader*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach.

Becoming a Reader

Every step a child takes toward learning to read leads to another. Bit by bit, the child builds the knowledge that is necessary for being a reader. Over their first 6 years, most children:

- Talk and listen.
- Listen to stories read aloud.
- Pretend to read.
- Learn how to handle books.
- Learn about print and how it works.
- Identify letters by name and shape.
- Identify separate sounds in spoken language.
- Write with scribbles and drawing.
- Connect single letters with the sounds they make.
- Connect what they already know to what they hear read.
- Predict what comes next in stories and poems.
- Connect combinations of letters with sounds.
- Recognize simple words in print.
- Sum up what a story is about.
- Write individual letters of the alphabet.
- Write words.
- Write simple sentences.
- Read simple books.
- Write to communicate.
- Read simple books.

Children can take more than one of these steps at the same time. This list of steps, though, gives you a general idea of how your child will progress toward reading.

Talking and Listening

Scientists who study the brain have found out a great deal about how we learn. They have discovered that babies learn much more from the sights and sounds around them than we thought previously. You can help your baby by taking advantage of her hunger to learn. From the very beginning, babies try to imitate the sounds that they hear us make. They “read” the looks on our faces and our movements. That’s why it is so important to talk, sing, smile, and gesture to your child. Hearing you talk is your baby’s very first step toward becoming a reader, because it helps her to love language and to learn words.

As your child grows older, continue talking with her. Ask her about the things she does. Ask her about the events and people in the stories you read together. Let her know you are listening carefully to what she says. By engaging her in talking and listening, you are also encouraging your child to think as she speaks. In addition, you are showing that you respect her knowledge and her ability to keep learning.

Reading Together

Imagine sitting your baby in your lap and reading a book to him for the first time. How different from just talking! Now you’re showing him pictures. You point to them. In a lively way, you explain what the pictures are. You’ve just helped your child take the next step beyond talking. You’ve shown him that words and pictures connect. And you’ve started him on his way to understanding and enjoying books.

While your child is still a baby, reading aloud to him should become part of your daily routine. Pick a quiet time, such as just before you put him to bed. This will give him a chance to rest between play and sleep. If you can, read with him in your lap or snuggled next to you so that he feels close and safe. As he gets older, he may need to move around some as you read to him. If he gets tired or restless, stop reading. Make reading aloud a quiet and comfortable time that your child looks forward to. Chances are very good that he will like reading all the more because of it.

Try to spend at least 30 minutes each day reading to and with your child. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As your child grows older, you should be able to tell if he wants you to read for longer periods. Don’t be discouraged if you have to skip a day or don’t always keep to your schedule. Just get back to your daily routine as soon as you can. Most of all, make sure that reading stays fun for both of you! Reading books with their children is one of the most important things that parents can do to help their children become readers.

What Does It Mean?

From the earliest days, talk with your child about what you are reading. You might point to pictures and name what is in them. When he is ready, have him do the same. Ask him, for example, if he can find the little mouse in the picture, or do whatever is fun and right for the book. Later on, as you read stories, read slowly and stop now and then to think aloud about what you’ve read. From the time your child is able to talk, ask him such questions about the story as, “What do you think will happen next?” or “Do you know what a palace is?” Answer his questions and, if you think he doesn’t understand

something, stop and talk more about what he asked. Don't worry if you occasionally break the flow of a story to make clear something that is important. However, don't stop so often that the child loses track of what is happening in the story.

Look for Books!

The books that you pick to read with your child are very important. If you aren't sure of what books are right for your child, ask a librarian to help you choose titles. (For more information on what libraries have to offer, see "Visiting the Library," page 27.)

Introduce your child to books when she is a baby. Let her hold and play with books made just for babies: board books with sturdy cardboard covers and thick pages; cloth books that are soft and washable, touch-and-feel books, or lift-the-flap books that contain surprises for your baby to discover. Choose books with covers that have big, simple pictures of things that she sees every day. Don't be upset if at first your child chews or throws a book. Be patient. Cuddling with the child as you point to and talk with great excitement about the book's pictures will soon capture her interest. When your baby becomes a toddler, she will enjoy helping to choose books for you to read to her.

As your child grows into a preschooler and kindergartner, the two of you can look for books that have longer stories and more words on the pages. Also look for books that have repeating words and phrases that she can begin to read or recognize when she sees them. By early first grade, add to this mix some books designed for beginning readers, including some books that have chapters and some books that show photographs and provide true information rather than make-believe stories.

Keep in mind that young children most often enjoy books about people, places, and things that are like those they know. The books can be about where you live or about parts of your culture, such as your religion, your holidays, or the way that you dress. If your child has special interests, such as dinosaurs or ballerinas, look for books about those interests.

From your child's toddler years through early first grade, you also should look for books of poems and rhymes. Remember when your baby heard your talking sounds and tried to imitate them? Rhymes are an extension of that language skill. By hearing and saying rhymes, along with repeated words and phrases, your child learns about spoken sounds and about words. Rhymes also spark a child's excitement about what comes next, which adds fun and adventure to reading.

Show Your Child That You Read

When you take your child to the library, check out a book for yourself. Then set a good example by letting your child see you reading for yourself. Ask your child to get one of her books and sit with you as you read your book, magazine, or newspaper. Don't worry if you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability. It's the reading that counts. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she may decide that it is important to her, too.

Learning about Print and Books

Reading together is a perfect time to help a late toddler or early preschooler learn what print is. As you read aloud, stop now and then and point to letters and words; then point to the pictures they stand for. Your child will begin to understand that the letters form words and that words name pictures. He will also start to learn that each letter has its own sound—one of the most important things your child can know when learning to read.

By the time children are 4, most have begun to understand that printed words have meaning. By age 5, most will begin to know that not just the story but the printed words themselves go from left to right. Many children will even start to identify some capital and small letters and simple words.

In late kindergarten or early first grade, your child may want to read on his own. Let him! But be sure that *he* wants to do it. Reading should be something he is proud of and eager to do and not a lesson.

How Does a Book Work?

Children are fascinated by how books look and feel. They see how easily you handle and read books, and they want to do the same. When your toddler watches you handle books, she begins to learn that a book is for reading, not tearing or tossing around. Before she is 3, she may even pick one up and pretend to read, an important sign that she is beginning to know what a book is for. As your child becomes a preschooler, she is learning that:

- A book has a front cover.
- A book has a beginning and an end.
- A book has pages.
- A page in a book has a top and a bottom.
- You turn pages one at a time to follow the story.
- You read a story from left to right of a page.

As you read with your 4- or 5-year-old, begin to remind her about these things. Read the title on the cover. Talk about the picture on the cover. Point to the place where the story starts and, later, where it ends. Let your child help turn the pages. When you start a new page, point to where the words of the story continue and keep following the words by moving your finger beneath them. It takes time for a child to learn these things, but when your child does learn them, she has solved some of reading's mysteries.

Early Efforts to Write

Writing and reading go hand in hand. As your child is learning one, he is learning the other. You can do certain things to make sure that he gets every opportunity to practice both. When he is about 2 years old, for example, give your child crayons and paper and encourage him to draw and scribble. He will have fun choosing which colors to use and which shapes to make. As he holds and moves the crayons, he will also develop muscle control. When he is a late toddler or early preschooler, he will become as eager to write as he is to read. (For more ideas on how to encourage your child's desire to write, see "As Simple as ABC," page 14, and "Write On!" page 25.)

Your preschool child's scribbles or drawings are his first writing. He will soon begin to write the alphabet letters. Writing the letters helps your child learn about their different sounds. His very early learning about letters and sounds gives him ideas about how to begin spelling words. When he begins writing words, don't worry that he doesn't spell them correctly. Instead, praise him for his efforts! In fact, if you look closely, you'll see that he's made a pretty good try at spelling a word for the first time. Later on, with help from teachers (and from you), he will learn the right way to spell words. For the moment, however, he has taken a great step toward being a writer.

Reading in Another Language

If your child's first language is not English, she can still become an excellent English reader and writer. She is on her way to successful English reading if she is beginning to learn many words and is interested in learning to read in her first language. You can help by supporting her in her first language as she learns English. Talk with her, read with her, encourage her to draw and write. In other words, do the same kinds of activities just discussed, but do them in your child's first language.

When your child first enters school, talk with her teacher. Teachers welcome such talks. They even have sign-up times early in the year, though usually you may ask for a meeting at any time. If you feel that you need some support in meeting with the teacher, ask a relative, neighbor, or someone else in your community to go with you.

When you do meet, tell the teacher the things that you are doing at home to strengthen your child's speaking and reading in her own language. Let the teacher know how important you child's reading is to you and ask for support for your efforts. Children who can switch back and forth between languages have accomplished something special. They should be praised and encouraged as they work for this achievement.

Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). Helping your child learn mathematics. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach.

Some Important Things Your Child Needs to Know About Mathematics

You can help your child learn math by offering her insights into how to approach math. She will develop more confidence in her math ability if she understands the following points:

1. Problems Can Be Solved in Different Ways.

Although most math problems have only one answer, there may be many ways to get to that answer. Learning math is more than finding the correct answer; it's also a process of solving problems and applying what you've learned to new problems.

2. Wrong Answers Sometimes Can Be Useful.

Accuracy is always important in math. However, sometimes you can use a wrong answer to help your child figure out why she made a mistake. Analyzing wrong answers can help your child to understand the concepts underlying the problem and to learn to apply reasoning skills to arrive at the correct answer.

Ask your child to explain how she solved a math problem. Her explanation might help you discover if she needs help with number skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, or with the concepts involved in solving the problem.

3. Take Risks!

Help your child to be a risk taker. Help him see the value of trying to solve a problem, even if it's difficult. Give your child time to explore different approaches to solving a difficult problem. As he works, encourage him to talk about what he is thinking. This will help him to strengthen math skills and to become an independent thinker and problem solver.

4. Being Able to Do Mathematics in Your Head Is Important.

Mathematics isn't restricted to pencil and paper activities. Doing math "in your head" (mental math) is a valuable skill that comes in handy as we make quick calculations of costs in stores, restaurants or gas stations. Let your child know that by using mental math, her math skills will become stronger.

5. It's Sometimes OK to Use a Calculator to Solve Mathematics Problems.

It's OK to use calculators to solve math problems—sometimes. They are widely used today, and knowing how to use them correctly is important. The idea is for your child not to fall back on the excuse, "I don't need to know math—I've got a calculator." Let your child know that to use calculators correctly and most efficiently, she will need a strong grounding in math operations — otherwise, how will she know whether the answer she sees displayed is reasonable!

Patterning and Algebra

Ministry of Education (2017). *Helping your child do mathematics: A guide for parents*. Toronto ON: The literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

We find patterns in nature, art, music, and literature. We also find them in numbers. Finding patterns is a key process in mathematics. The ability to recognize and identify patterns helps us make predictions based on our observations. Understanding patterns helps prepare children for the study of number sense, measurement, geometry, algebra, and data management in later grades. In school, students are asked to describe patterns as repeating, growing, shrinking, and relational. As students examine patterns, they need to identify the attributes of patterns (such as colour, shape, and size) that change and those that stay the same. Such attributes are used in describing the patterns and writing pattern rules.

Kindergarten to Grade 3

How can hands and feet be used to make sound patterns? One kind of pattern that children enjoy making is the physical pattern. Clap your hands and stomp one foot in a particular sequence (clap, clap, stomp; clap, clap, stomp; clap, clap, stomp). Have your child repeat the same sequence. Then together create variations of the pattern. Teach your child simple dances that include a sequence of steps and movements.

In what ways do authors use patterns in songs and stories? Many children's books and songs repeat lines or passages in predictable ways, allowing children to recognize and predict the patterns. Together, look for patterns in various storybooks and songs. Add a challenge by asking your child to compose a new line for the pattern in a book or song. What different types of shape patterns are there at home or in the neighborhood? Your child will find patterns in clothing, in wallpaper, in tiles, on toys, and among trees and flowers in the park. Encourage your child to describe the patterns found. Try to identify the features of the pattern that are repeated. What words can be used in describing patterns? In a repeating pattern, the pattern core is the part of the pattern that continuously recurs (for example, in the pattern ABB, ABB, ABB, the pattern core is ABB). Lay down a row of 9 spoons so that the handles point up or down in a pattern with a core of up, up, down (up, up, down; up, up, down; up, down, down). Ask your child to extend the pattern. Make this task more challenging by making the pattern core longer (for example ,up, up, down, up; up, up, down, up; up, up, down, up) or by changing one of the elements in the pattern core (for example, up, up, down, sideways; up, up, down, sideways; up, up, down, sideways). Ask your child to describe the patterns. What patterns are there in a one hundred chart? Make a one hundred chart by writing the numbers from 1 to 100 in rows of 10 (1 to 10 in the first row, 11 to 20 in the second row, and so on), or use the one hundred chart on page 9. Ask your child to look for the patterns up and down, across, or diagonally in the chart. For example, have your child pick out all the numbers that contain a 2 or a 7 and describe the different number patterns that he or she sees.

7 Ways to Help Your Kids With Math Homework

National Science Foundation. (2020, March). *7 ways to help your kids with math homework*. Alexandria, VA: National Science Foundation.

As schools across the country remain closed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are republishing this article as a resource for parents and caregivers taking on homeschooling responsibilities. In this post, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, NSF's former chief operating officer and current president of the University of Maine, joins colleagues in our Education and Human Resources Directorate to share tips on taking an educator's approach to math at home.

If you've ever had to help your child with math homework, you really appreciate their teachers, who do it every day. "Math anxiety" isn't something only kids experience. Maybe you haven't seen an algebra formula in years, and weren't that comfortable with them when you were a student. Maybe you're a skilled mathematician, but don't know how to explain what you're doing to a child. Whatever the case, math homework can leave parents feeling every bit as frustrated as their children. Homework doesn't have to lead to unpleasantness, though.

What I've learned through my own experience—as a teacher, a researcher, from helping my own children and now watching my daughter work as an elementary school mathematics teacher—is that communication is (excuse the pun) the common denominator when it comes to making math homework a positive experience.

The National Science Foundation (NSF), where I work, is dedicated to research. We support scientists across the country who study learning and education systems. But we're also teachers at heart. On lunch breaks in the past, a group of us have gathered to help our NSF peers with their own questions about how to help their kids learn math.

Here are a few tips from what we have learned:

- Try as hard as you can to understand what your child is saying. When your child is working out a math problem, ask her to think out loud, to say what she's doing and why. In some cases, your child might be able to answer her own questions. Don't just come in with an explanation of how things should be done.
- We've learned a lot about teaching. NSF-supported researchers and other scientists are producing findings that change the way we understand learning and how we teach. Math instruction today might look very different from when you were in school. Keep an open mind. If you're dismissive of something, there's a chance your child will be, too.
- Assume there is some logical thinking your child is employing. Even if he's producing incorrect answers, your child is employing some kind of thought process, and understanding it is the key to providing help. Let's say your child is adding $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ and getting $\frac{2}{7}$. If his explanation is that he was adding the numerators and denominators, you've just learned that he might not fully understand what a fraction is. And that gives you a starting point for helping.

- Homework is about more than producing the correct answers. It's about learning processes and skills. Even if you can come up with the right answer to a problem with which your child is struggling, there's a lot you still need to explain—namely, how you arrived at that point.
- Become a teacher's ally. Talk to your child's teachers. Find out how they are teaching certain ideas and concepts. At times, parents unhappy about their children's struggles to learn can approach teachers from a place of frustration. View your child's teachers as your partners and collaborators.
- Find additional help. Worried you won't be able to understand the math your child is trying to learn? Take a careful look at her textbook or online learning materials. See if the publisher provides any resources. Look for other publicly available teaching aids, especially those that have had NSF support. Do you have friends or coworkers with children? Start a lunch group to talk through your homework challenges.
- Remember, every child is different and learns differently. Just because your oldest child learned his multiplication facts one way doesn't mean his younger sister will do the same. Which brings us back to the first tip: Listen to each child and do your best to understand.

5 Resources for Parents Who Are Stumped by Math Homework

Hogan, J. (2019, May). *5 Resources for Parents Who Are Stumped by Math Homework*. Scholastic. Retrieved at: <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/learning-toolkit-blog/parent-resources-for-helping-with-math-homework.html>

With a new school year underway, there are many exciting events ahead for you and your child. And then, there are some events you might not be looking forward to — like deciphering your child's math homework! As new concepts and strategies are being taught, it may feel like you have no idea how to help your child. While I love math and teaching it, math homework can still be a tricky part of my own family's nightly routine.

These five websites below are my go-to for resources, worksheets, and games.

1. **[Learn Zillion](#)**: This video-based website teaches math concepts in short, student-centered lessons. You can search a concept and watch different videos that will teach you and your child how to understand math ideas and strategies. The videos are very child friendly! Recommended for 2nd grade and up.
2. **[K-5 Math Teaching Resources](#)**: I love this website! It's full of games and activities for each math standard that allow you and your child to better understand different topics being taught in the classroom. There are different categories to choose from: number sense, geometry, and measurement and data. Click on the activity or game that will help practice different mathematical concepts. Recommended for Kindergarten through 5th grade.

3. [Khan Academy](#): Khan Academy focuses on interactive videos and practice exercises that support your child's learning at her own pace. The activities are simple enough for your child to do on her own but also challenging enough to push her to learn more. Recommended for Kindergarten and up.
4. [NCTM Illuminations](#): This site is an incredible resource for teachers, parents, and students. There are lessons, interactive games, and brainteasers that are all helpful with homework and extra practice at home. Recommended for PreK and up.
5. [K 5 Learning](#): K 5 Learning is a wonderful parent-support for math help at home. It offers online support and numerous printable worksheets to support you and your child's learning at home. There are even parent progress reports if you chose to assess your child's progress. Recommended for Kindergarten through 5th grade.

Keep these resources on hand when math homework starts to get tricky. They can be a great support to both you and your child!

Helping Your Child Learn Science

Adapted from: Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child learn science*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center.

In everyday interactions with your child, you can do many things—and do them without lecturing or applying pressure—to help her learn science.

Here are a few ideas:

- See how long it takes for a dandelion or a rose to burst into full bloom.
- Watch the moon as it appears to change shape over the course of a month and record the changes.
- Look for constellations in the night sky.
- Bake a cake.
- Solve the problem of a drooping plant.
- Figure out how the spin cycle of the washing machine gets the water out of the clothes.
- Take apart an old clock or mechanical toy—you don't need to put it back together!
- Watch icicles melt.
- Observe pigeons, squirrels, butterflies, ants or spider webs.
- Go for a walk and talk about how the dogs (or birds or cats) that you see are alike and different.

Discover what materials the buildings in your community are made of. Wood? Concrete? Adobe? Brick? Granite? Sandstone? Steel? Glass? Talk about the reasons for using these materials.

Developing Your Child's Scientific Understanding

Unifying Concepts and Processes Children can be introduced gradually to basic scientific concepts that will provide a framework for understanding and connecting many scientific facts and observations. This booklet, we will focus on five concepts and processes taken from the *National Science Education Standards*, released in 1996 by the National Resource Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

You can easily introduce your child to the following five concepts through the activities in this booklet and many other simple science-related activities that you and your child can do at home or in the community.

1. Systems, Order and Organization

The natural world is so large and complicated that scientists break it down into smaller parts in order to study it in depth. These smaller units are called systems. Scientists look for patterns through which they can classify—or organize—things into systems. For instance, animals that have fur or hair are classified as mammals. When you encourage your child to gather and organize objects according to their size or color—for example, leaves or insects—you are helping prepare her to think in terms of systems. Furthermore, scientists believe that nature is understandable and predictable—that there is an order to it. For instance, low barometric pressure is often followed by storms. Challenging your child to make reasonable predictions such as this will further prepare her to look at the world in a scientific way.

2. Evidence, Models and Explanations

Scientists test the explanations they come up with, and the results of their tests are evidence on which to base their explanations. Sometimes they call their explanations “theories” or “models” or “hypotheses”. Children can test their theories about the world too: Is it the baking soda that makes my pancakes thick? Can I make thicker pancakes with more soda?

3. Change, Constancy and Measurement

The natural world changes continually. Some objects change rapidly and some at a rate too slow for us to observe. You can encourage your child to look for changes by asking him to observe and talk about:

- What happens to breakfast cereal when we pour milk on it?
- What happens over time when a plant isn’t watered or exposed to proper sunlight?
- What changes can be reversed? Once water is turned into ice cubes, can it be turned back into water? Yes. But if an apple is cut into slices, can the slices be changed back into the whole apple?

Children can observe change more carefully through measurement. Keeping a growth chart or making a graph of the temperature each day will give your child practice looking for differences and measuring them—and help him to understand how he’ll need to use math skills in learning science.

4. Evolution and Equilibrium

It’s hard for children to understand evolution (how things change over time) and equilibrium (how things attain a steady and balanced state of being). During these early years, you can, however, talk about how things change over time and point them out to your child. For instance, show your child a series of photos of himself from birth to the present and talk about the many ways he’s changed. And, you can talk about balance and the work it often takes to achieve it: Learning to ride a bicycle or walk with a book on his head are good examples.

5. Form and Function

One of the simplest themes in science is all around: The shape of a natural thing is almost always related to its function. Begin with man-made objects. Can your child guess the use of a thimble, a corkscrew, a phonograph record? When you are looking at animals, ask him questions such as: “What might those plates do on the stegosaurus’s back?” “What sort of habitat would a web-footed platypus like?” His best guess will almost always be correct.

Study Strategies for Biology

Jaslow, A. & Hill, T. (2020). Study strategies for biology. Rhodes College. Memphis, TN:

Retrieved at: <https://sites.rhodes.edu/academic-and-learning-resources/learning-tips/study-strategies-biology>

BIOLOGY STRATEGIES

Make learning a daily routine.

1. Repeat study over several shorter periods over different days. Study the material weekly, not just before tests. Leave plenty of time between study and self-testing so you’re not just testing short-term memory and repeat until you know that you can always get them right.
2. Well before an exam, take a subset of the material and study it as if the exam on that topic was tomorrow. Finally, whatever you do, whether alone, with the peer study partner, or in groups, don’t put it off until the night before the exam.
3. If your professor provides materials ahead of class (e.g., lecture outline, PowerPoint) get them and use them to guide your note-taking.
4. Flesh out notes in 24-48 hour cycle. “Note Massage”

After lecture add to, or rewrite, your notes while the scribbles still make sense. Do it regularly as a part of a formal schedule or you won’t do it at all. Use complete sentences; add labels and notes to diagrams even if you think they’re quite clear already; try to organize things into categories to show relationships.

Get all the missing holes filled. Use other students, your text, and your professor.

For topics which you do not fully understand, get explanations. Don’t wait until close to the exam to fill in this understanding. Get it now. Before the test you need to be studying with a higher level of understanding.

Study to understand, not just to memorize words.

1. Don’t just read over your notes and PowerPoints. If all you do is read your notes, the text, and the PowerPoint, then you’ll gain only a passive familiarity with the material. You want to be able to recognize elements of what you know when you see them in new situations and be able to explain it to others.
2. When trying to learn the material, focus on the right stuff. The things that your professor

considers most important to the subject and which are most likely to appear on quizzes and exams are the things that have been emphasized in lecture and in specifically assigned readings. Learn these things first and best.

3. You should practice explaining the material and applying it to new situations. Why should you do this? Questions sometimes pose entirely new situations, which you need to analyze – even though you’ve never seen that situation before. Suppose, for instance, you’ve learned a lot about a certain forest ecosystem in class. And then on the exam, the professor doesn’t ask a thing about the forest, but instead puts you in the middle of the desert, acquaints you briefly with certain of its inhabitants, and asks you complicated questions about their relationships to one another. If you really know your way around the ecosystem you were given (the forest) – know about its energy and nutrient flow, its inhabitants’ adaptive strategies, etc. – then you will be better prepared to see familiar patterns in this strange new situation (the desert). You know in advance that there’s a food network of some sort – that it will be like that in the forest in some ways, etc. You end up understanding a bit about the desert ecosystem not because you memorized it (indeed you’ve never encountered it before at all), but rather because you know the forest ecosystem so well that you now can think beyond just that. But the only way to be sure in advance that you really know the given system well (the forest) is to practice explaining what you know.
4. Learn individual concepts before integrating it together. You need to have content learned and understood before you can go to the next level of understanding by integrating the information. This is one reason it is so important to turn around your notes quickly and answer any fact and detail questions right away.

Use active study methods.

1. Map out all connected material. Try to see how disparate lecture topics are connected. How does a concept or process tie to a larger picture? How does new material build off of prior course content? How could it be built on later?
2. When explaining causal connections, it's important to build a logical and adequate chain of connection between the initial cause and the final effect. For instance, if you were asked to explain why carbon monoxide kills, you might answer, "Because it stops respiration." That might be adequate in casual conversation, but it isn't normally enough on an exam. There are too many questions left unanswered. "How does CO inhibit respiration?" "Why does the stopping of respiration lead to death?" Depending on the course and the level of detail normally employed in it, you might well be expected to offer an answer more along the lines of the following: "CO binds to hemoglobin, inhibiting its ability to carry oxygen from the lungs to the tissues. Oxygen is required as the terminal acceptor of electrons in the respiratory electron transport system, which then ceases because oxygen is absent. Without respiration, no ATP is generated. And since ATP is the form of energy needed by numerous energy-requiring processes essential to life, these processes cease, and death ensues."
3. Notice how many logical links between CO and death profitably can be employed.

Some courses, depending on emphasis, may require fewer than these; some might require more. It's up to you, of course, to gauge what's appropriate for the course that you're in. To form the habits and instincts of offering "complete" answers, become more like the pestiferous child who replies to every statement with the question, "Why?" It will help your thinking immensely.

4. Practice coming up with questions that a professor could ask on course material as well as practicing and refining answers to those questions. Exams in college are the worst possible place to get feedback for the first time. You need to test yourself frequently to truly gauge how much you comprehend.
5. When testing your understanding, make yourself give clear, accurate, brief, but complete explanations, entirely from memory if working in a group, start by agreeing upon representative questions, then take turns answering them, while others point out what answers are especially good and what answers need improvement.
6. If studying alone, write out what seem to be good answers, based upon your notes, and then put those answers aside for a while and see how well you can reproduce them from memory.
7. Do the same thing with any diagrams or figures covered in class to make sure you can recreate them from memory with all the key parts and steps labeled, and their function and significance stated. Even if you don't have to create a diagram or figure on a test, practicing it from scratch will help you to understand the material better.

Helping Your Child Learn History

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child learn history*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center.

Enjoying History with Your Child

As a parent, you can help your child want to learn in a way no one else can. That desire to learn is a key to your child's success, and, of course, enjoyment is an important motivator for learning. As you choose activities to do with your child, remember that helping her to learn history doesn't mean that you can't have a good time. In fact, you can teach your child a lot through play. Here are some things to do to make history both fun and productive for you and your child:

1. Use conversation to give your child confidence to learn.

Encouraging your child to talk with you about a topic, no matter how off the mark he may seem, lets him know that you take his ideas seriously and value his efforts to learn. The ability to have conversations with your child profoundly affects what and how he learns.

2. Let your child know it's OK to ask you questions.

If you can't answer all of her questions, that's all right—no one has all the answers. Some of the best answers you can give are, "Good question. How can we find the answer?" and "Let's find out together." Together, you and your child can propose possible answers and then check them by using reference books and the Internet, or by asking someone who is likely to know the correct answers.

3. Make the most of everyday opportunities.

Take advantage of visits from grandparents to encourage storytelling about their lives—What was school like for them? What was happening in the country and the world? What games or songs did they like? What were the fads of the day? Who are their heroes? On holidays, talk with your child about why the holiday is observed, who (or what) it honors and how and whether it's observed in places other than the United States. At ball games, talk about the flag and the national anthem and what they mean to the country.

4. Recognize that children have their own ideas and interests.

By letting your child choose some activities that he wants to do, you let him know that his ideas and interests have value. You can further reinforce this interest by asking your child to teach you what he learns.

Helping Your Child Succeed

This section is meant to offer concepts that support your child's general school success and share concepts for helping your child become a responsible citizen.



**Helping Your Child
Succeed in School**



**Helping Your Child Become
a Responsible Citizen**

[Back to Menu](#)

Helping Your Child Succeed in School

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child to succeed*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center.

The Basics

If you think about it, although school is very important, it does not really take up very much of a child's time. In the United States, the school year averages 180 days; in other nations, the school year can last up to 240 days and students are often in school more hours per day than American students. Clearly, the hours and days that a child is *not* in school are important for learning, too.

Encourage Your Child to Read

Helping your child become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school—and in life. The importance of reading simply can't be overstated. Reading helps children in all school subjects. More important, it is the key to lifelong learning. Here are some tips on how to help your child become a reader.

Start early. When your child is still a baby, reading aloud to him¹ should become part of your daily routine. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As your child grows older, you should be able to tell if he wants you to read for longer periods. As you read, talk with your child. Encourage him to ask questions and to talk about the story. Ask him to predict what will come next. When your child begins to read, ask him to read to you from books or magazines that he enjoys.

Make sure that your home has lots of reading materials that are appropriate for your child. Keep books, magazines and newspapers in the house. Reading materials don't have to be new or expensive. You often can find good books and magazines for your child at yard or library sales. Ask family members and friends to consider giving your child books and magazine subscriptions as gifts for birthdays or other special occasions. Set aside quiet time for family reading. Some families even enjoy reading aloud to each other, with each family member choosing a book, story, poem or article to read to the others.

Show that you value reading. Let your child see you reading for pleasure as well as for performing your routine activities as an adult—reading letters and recipes, directions and instructions, newspapers, computer screens and so forth. Go with her to the library and check out books for yourself. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she is likely to decide that it's important to her, too. the booklet easier to read.

¹ Please note: In this booklet, we refer to a child as a "him" in some place and a "her" in others. We do this to make the booklet easier to read. Please understand, however, that every point that we make is the same for boys and girls.

If you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability or if you would like reading help for yourself or other family members, check with your local librarian or with your child's school about literacy programs in your community.

Get help for your child if he has a reading problem. When a child is having reading difficulties, the reason might be simple to understand and deal with. For example, your child might have trouble seeing and need glasses or he may just need more help with reading skills. If you think that your child needs extra help, ask his teachers about special services, such as after-school or summer reading programs. Also ask teachers or your local librarian for names of community organizations and local literacy volunteer groups that offer tutoring services. The good news is that no matter how long it takes, most children *can* learn to read. Parents, teachers and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem and then provide the right help as soon as possible. When a child gets such help, chances are very good that she will develop the skills she needs to succeed in school and in life. *Nothing is more important than your support for your child as she goes through school. Make sure she gets any extra help she needs as soon as possible and always encourage her and praise her efforts.*

For more information about reading, see the U.S. Department of Education booklet, [*Helping Your Child Become a Reader*](#).

Talk with Your Child

Talking and listening play major roles in children's school success. It's through hearing parents and family members talk and through responding to that talk that young children begin to pick up the language skills they will need if they are to do well. For example, children who don't hear a lot of talk and who aren't encouraged to talk themselves often have problems learning to read, which can lead to other school problems. In addition, children who haven't learned to listen carefully often have trouble following directions and paying attention in class. Think of talking with your child as being like a tennis game with words—instead of a ball—bouncing back and forth. Find time to talk any place, for example:

As you walk with your child or ride with her in a car or on a bus, talk with her about what she's doing at school. Ask her to tell you about a school assembly or a field trip. Point out and talk about things that you see as you walk—funny signs, new cars, interesting people. As you shop in a store, talk with your child about prices, differences in brands and how to pick out good vegetables and fruit. Give your child directions about where to find certain items, then have him go get them.

As you fix dinner, ask your child to help you follow the steps in a recipe. Talk with him about what can happen if you miss a step or leave out an ingredient. As you fix a sink or repair a broken table, ask your child to hand you the tools that you name. Talk with her about each step you take to complete the repair. Tell her what you're doing and why you're doing it. Ask her for suggestions about how you should do something.

As you watch TV together, talk with your child about the programs. If you're watching one of her favorite programs, encourage her to tell you about the background of the characters, which

ones she likes and dislikes and who the actors are. Compare the program to a program that you liked when you were her age.

As you read a book with your child, pause occasionally to talk to him about what's happening in the book. Help him to relate the events in the book to events in his life: "Look at that tall building! Didn't we see that when we were in Chicago?" Ask him to tell in his own words what the book was about. Ask him about new words in a book and help him to figure out what they mean. It's also important for you to show your child that you're interested in what he has to say.

Demonstrate for him how to be a good listener:

- When your child talks to you, stop what you're doing and pay attention. Look at him and ask questions to let him know that you have heard what he said: "So when are you going to help your granddad work on his car?"
- When your child tells you about something, occasionally repeat what he says to let him know that you are listening closely: "The school bus broke down *twice!*"

Monitor Homework

Let your child know that you think education is important and so homework has to be done. Here are some ways to help your child with homework: Have a special place for your child to study. The homework area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice, but for many children, the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine. The area should have good lighting and it should be fairly quiet. Provide supplies and identify resources. For starters, have available pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper and a dictionary. Other supplies that might be helpful include a stapler, paper clips, maps, a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, glue, paste, scissors, a ruler, a calculator, index cards, a thesaurus and an almanac. If possible, keep these items together in one place. If you can't provide your child with needed supplies, check with her teacher, school counselor or principal about possible sources of assistance.

Set a regular time for homework. Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age, as well as her specific needs. You'll need to work with a young child to develop a schedule. You should give your older child the responsibility for making up a schedule independently—although you'll want to make sure that it's a workable one. You may find it helpful to have her write out her schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often, such as on the refrigerator.

Remove distractions. Turn off the TV and discourage your child from making and receiving social telephone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment, however, may be helpful.) If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time.

You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions can't be avoided; your child may want to complete assignments in the local library.

Don't expect or demand perfection. When your child asks you to look at what she's done—from skating a figure 8 to finishing a math assignment—show interest and praise her when she's done something well. If you have criticisms or suggestions, make them in a helpful way.

One final note: You may be reluctant to help your child with homework because you feel that you don't know the subject well enough or because you don't speak or read English as well as your child. But helping with homework doesn't mean *doing* the homework. It isn't about solving the problems for your child, it's about supporting him to do his best.

You may not know enough about a subject such as calculus to help your child with a specific assignment, but you can help nonetheless by showing that you are interested, helping him get organized, providing a place the materials he needs to work, monitoring his work to see that he completes it and praising his efforts.

For more information about homework, see the U.S. Department of Education booklets, *Helping Your Child with Homework* and *Homework Tips for Parents*,

Monitor TV Viewing and Video Game Playing

American children on average spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework or other school-related activities. Here are some suggestions for helping your child to use TV and video games wisely:

Limit the time that you let your child watch TV. Too much television cuts into important activities in a child's life, such as reading, playing with friends and talking with family members.

Model good TV viewing habits. Remember that children often imitate their parents' behavior. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members watch a lot of TV are likely to spend their time in the same way. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members have "quiet" time away from the TV when they read (either alone to each other), talk to each other, play games or engage in other activities tend to do the same.

Watch TV with your child when you can. Talk with him about what you see. Answer his questions. Try to point out the things in TV programs that are like your child's everyday life.

- When you can't watch TV with your child, spot check to see what she's watching.
- Ask questions after the program ends. See what excites her and what troubles her.
- Find out what she has learned and remembered.
- Go to the library and find books that explore the themes of the TV shows that your child watches.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with TV programs, be aware of the games he likes to play and discuss his choices with him.

Encourage Your Child to Use the Library

Libraries are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Helping your child find out about libraries will set him on the road to being an independent learner. Here are some suggestions for how to help:

- Introduce your child to the library as early as possible. Even when your child is a toddler, take him along on weekly trips to the library. If you work during the day or have other obligations, remember that many libraries are open in the evening.
- If your child can print his name, it is likely that your library will issue him a library card if you will also sign for him. See that your child gets his own library card as soon as possible so that he can check out his own books.

When you take your child to the library, introduce yourself and your child to the librarian. Ask the librarian to show you around the library and tell you about the services it has to offer. For example, in addition to all kinds of books, your library most likely will have magazines of interest to both your child and to you. It will likely have newspapers from many different places. Most libraries also have tapes and CDs of books, music CDs and tapes, movies on video and on DVD and many more resources. Your library also might have books in languages other than English or programs to help adults improve their English reading skills. Ask the librarian to tell your child about special programs that he might participate in, such as summer reading programs and book clubs and about services such as homework help.

Let your child know that she must follow the library's rules of behavior. Libraries want children to use their materials and services. However, they generally have rules such as the following that your child needs to know and obey:

- Library materials must be handled carefully.
- Materials that are borrowed must be returned on time. Your child needs to learn how long she can keep materials and what the fine will be for materials that are returned late.
- All library users need to be considerate of each other. Shouting, running and being disruptive are not appropriate library behaviors.

Help Your Child Learn to Use the Internet Properly and Effectively

The Internet/World Wide WEB—a network of computers that connects people and information all around the world—has become an important part of how we learn and of how we interact with others. For children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet. Here are some suggestions for helping your child learn to do so properly and effectively:

- Spend time online with your child. If you don't have a computer at home, ask your librarian if the library has computers that you and your child may use. Learn along with your child. If you're not familiar with computers or with the Internet, ask the librarian if

and when someone is available at the library to help you and your child learn together to use them. If your child knows about computers, let her teach you.

- Ask her to explain what she is doing and why. Ask her to show you her favorite Web sites and to tell you what she likes about them. This will help her build self-confidence and pride in her abilities.
- Help your child to locate appropriate Internet Web sites. At the same time, make sure that she understands what you think are appropriate Web sites for her to visit. Point her in the direction of sites that can help her with homework or that relate to her interests.
- Pay attention to any games she might download or copy from the Internet. Some games are violent or contain sexual or other content that is inappropriate for children. Resources such as GetNetWise (<http://www.getnetwise.org/>), a public service provided by Internet corporations and public interest groups and FamiliesConnect (<http://www.ala.org/ICONN/familiesconnect.html>), a service of the American Library Association, can help you to make good Web site choices and give you more information about Internet use.
- You might consider using “filters” to block your child from accessing sites that may be inappropriate. These filters include software programs that you can install on your computer. In addition, many Internet service providers offer filters (often for free) that restrict the sites that children can visit. Of course, these filters are not always completely effective—and children can find ways around them. The best safeguard is your supervision and involvement.
- Monitor the amount of time that your child spends online. Internet surfing can be just as time consuming as watching TV. Don’t let it take over your child’s life. Have her place a clock near the computer and keep track of how much time she is spending. online. Remember, many commercial online services charge for the amount of time the service is used. These charges can mount up quickly!

Teach your child rules for using the Internet safely. Let him know that he should never do the following:

- Tell anyone—including his friends—his computer password;
- Use bad language or send cruel, threatening or untrue e-mail messages;
- Give out any personal information, including his name or the names of family members, home address, phone number, age, school name; or
- Arrange to meet a stranger that he has “talked” with in an online “chat room.”

Encourage Your Child to Be Responsible and to Work Independently

Taking responsibility and working independently are important qualities for school success. Here are some suggestions for helping your child to develop these qualities:

Establish rules. Every home needs reasonable rules that children know and can depend on. Have your child help you to set rules, then make sure that you enforce the rules consistently.

Make it clear to your child that he has to take responsibility for what he does, both at home and at school. For example, don't automatically defend your child if his teacher tells you that he is often late to class or is disruptive when he is in class. Ask for his side of the story. If a charge is true, let him take the consequences.

Work with your child to develop a reasonable, consistent schedule of jobs to do around the house. List them on a calendar. Younger children can help set the table or put away their toys and clothes. Older children can help prepare meals and clean up afterwards.

Show your child how to break a job down into small steps, then to do the job one step at a time. This works for everything—getting dressed, cleaning a room or doing a big homework assignment.

Make your child responsible for getting ready to go to school each morning—getting up on time, making sure that he has everything he needs for the school day and so forth. If necessary, make a checklist to help him remember what he has to do.

Monitor what your child does after school, in the evenings and on weekends. If you can't be there when your child gets home, give her the responsibility of checking in with you by phone to discuss her plans.

Encourage Active Learning

Children need active learning as well as quiet learning such as reading and doing homework. Active learning involves asking and answering questions, solving problems and exploring interests. Active learning also can take place when your child plays sports, spends time with friends, acts in a school play, plays a musical instrument, or visits museums and bookstores.

To promote active learning, listen to your child's ideas and respond to them. Let him jump in with questions and opinions when you read books together. When you encourage this type of give-and-take at home, your child's participation and interest in school is likely to increase.

Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen

Paulu, N., Lehy, F., Walne, B., W. Burroews, A., & Matos, J. (2005). *Helping your child become a responsible citizen*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center.

Just as children must be taught to tie their shoes, read and write, solve math problems, and understand science concepts and events in history, so must they be guided in developing the qualities of character that are valued by their families and by the communities in which they live. It is only through guidance and modeling by caring adults that children learn to be honest and thoughtful, to stand up for their principles, to care about others, to act responsibly and to make sound moral choices.

Character

Character is a set of qualities, or values, that shape our thoughts, actions, reactions and feelings. People with strong character:

- show compassion,
- are honest and fair,
- display self-discipline in setting and meeting goals,
- make good judgments,
- show respect to others,
- show courage in standing up for beliefs,
- have a strong sense of responsibility,
- are good citizens who are concerned for their community and maintain self-respect.

Compassion

Compassion, or *empathy*, means identifying with and being concerned about other people's feelings and needs. It provides the emotional root for caring about other people. It allows us to be understanding and tolerant of different points of views and beliefs, it makes us aware of the suffering of others, and it allows us to empathize with them or to feel their suffering as our own. Compassion also allows us to feel joy and excitement—rather than anger and despair—at other people's successes and achievements.

Honesty and Fairness

Simply put, *honesty* means being truthful with ourselves and with others. It means caring enough about others not to mislead them for personal benefit. It means facing up to our mistakes, even when we have to admit them to others or when they may get us into trouble.

Fairness means acting in a just way and making decisions, especially important ones, on the basis of evidence rather than prejudice. It means “playing by the rules” and standing up for the right of everyone to be treated equally and honestly. To understand the importance of being honest and fair, children need to learn that living together in a family, community or even a nation depends on mutual trust. Without honesty and fairness, trusting each other becomes very difficult, and families—and societies—fall apart.

Self-discipline

Self-discipline is the ability to set a realistic goal or make a plan—then stick with it. It is the ability to resist doing things that can hurt others or ourselves. It involves keeping promises and following through on commitments. It is the foundation of many other qualities of character. Often self-discipline requires persistence and sticking to long-term commitments—putting off immediate pleasure for later fulfillment. It also includes dealing effectively with emotions, such as anger and envy, and developing patience.

Learning self-discipline helps children regulate their behavior and gives them the willpower to make good decisions and choices. On the other hand, the failure to develop self-discipline leaves children wide open to destructive behavior. Without the ability to control or evaluate their impulses, they often dive headlong into harmful situations.

Good Judgment

Children develop strong character by learning to think about and make *sound judgments* about what is right or wrong, good or bad. These are not always easy distinctions for adults to make, much less children. For example, it can be difficult for a child to recognize the difference between acting bravely and acting recklessly. As parents, we can help by showing, through what we do as well as what we say, that it is important in such situations to think carefully and honestly about what should be done, carefully weighing how others will be affected by what we do. Sometimes we get into trouble because we “just didn’t think.” We let our emotions lead us to actions that we regret later. Making good judgments requires skills in monitoring impulses, using reasoning to sort through feelings and facts, and thinking about the consequences of our actions. Your child’s ability to think and make sound judgments will improve as she matures. With age, however, it also may become easier for her to try to justify and make excuses for selfish or reckless behavior. However, if you have helped her develop strong habits of honesty, courage, responsibility and self-respect, your child will have the ability to see the flaws in her reasoning and be able to come to the right conclusion about what to do.

Respect for Others

Respect for others is based on self-respect and is summed up in the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. It is the value that makes the world a more decent and civilized place. People show respect in many ways. They speak and act civilly - avoiding insults, cruel remarks and rude or crude language. They are courteous and considerate of others, including family members and friends, and care about their rights, beliefs and well-being. They treat others fairly and as individuals, regardless of race, sex, age or ethnic group. They display tolerance for people who do not share their personal beliefs and likes—so long as those people do not harm others. Research indicates that children learn to respect others when they are

treated with respect themselves. Constant criticism of a child, negative comments about him and failure to praise his achievements can lead the child to be disrespectful to others. Treating children with respect pays large dividends both to families and to societies as a whole.

Self-respect

Self-respect means taking satisfaction in appropriate behavior and hard won accomplishments. People with self-respect also respect others. They do not need to disparage others or build themselves up by bragging or exaggerating their abilities or talents. They do not need lots of money or power to feel good about themselves. People who respect themselves view selfishness, loss of self-discipline, recklessness, cowardice and dishonesty as wrong and unworthy of them. They have inner strength and are unwilling to let others use or manipulate them. They know that showing patience or tolerance does not mean allowing others to mistreat them. People with self-respect do not crumble when they fail. They accept mistakes as a part of life. As we help our children set high standards for themselves, we also need to let them know that failure is no embarrassment when they have done their best. Teaching children self-respect, however, does not mean complimenting everything they do. They also need honest criticism from time to time. When we do criticize, we should focus on things they have done, not on them personally.

Courage

Courage is the ability to overcome fear in order to do what is right, even if it is difficult or risky. Courage can mean facing physical dangers, but it also can mean standing up for beliefs and making hard decisions on the basis of evidence rather than on what is the easy or popular thing to do. It means being neither reckless nor cowardly but facing up to our duties and responsibilities. Courage, however, does not mean never being afraid; and children should be told that there are times when it is all right to be frightened and to run away from danger. But they also need to learn how to face and overcome some fears, such as a fear of the dark.

Responsibility

Being *responsible* means being dependable, keeping promises and honoring our commitments. It is accepting the consequences for what we say and do. It also means developing our potential. People who are responsible don't make excuses for their actions or blame others when things go wrong. They think things through and use good judgment before they take action. They behave in ways that encourage others to trust them. People who are responsible take charge of their lives. They make plans and set goals for nurturing their talents and skills. They are resilient in finding ways to overcome adversity. They make decisions, taking into account obligations to family and community. Children need to learn that being part of a family and a community involves accepting responsibilities. When each of us acts responsibly, our families and communities will be stronger.

Transitioning to High School and PBIS Support

This section highlights the genuine phenomena where different content subjects such as math, chemistry, and history require different reading strategies in higher grades. The Personal Behavioral Interventions and Supports, PBIS component, shares advice supporting students with structured schedules and clear expectations.



From Middle School
to High School



Supporting Your
Child with PBIS

From Middle School to High School

Helping the Transition from Middle School to High School

Adapted from Shanahan and Shanahan (2020).

Shanahan, T. & Shanahan, C. (2020). Teaching disciplinary literacy. Retrieved at: www.shanahanonliteracy.com.

It is important to develop both basic literacy skills (that underlie or are used in multiple disciplines) as well as highly specialized skills that are uniquely implicated in the ways a particular discipline creates, communicates, and critiques knowledge. In other words, different subjects have different goals and approaches for reading and understanding their textbooks. For example:

Math Reading Goals

- Goal: arrive at “truth”
- Importance of “close reading” an intensive consideration of every word in the text
- Rereading a major strategy
- Heavy emphasis on error detection
- Precision of understanding essential

Chemistry Reading Goals

- Text provides knowledge that allows prediction of how the world works
- Full understanding needed of experiments or processes
- Close connections among prose, graphs, charts, formulas (alternative representations of constructs an essential aspect of chemistry text)
- Major reading strategies include corroboration and transformation

History Reading Goals

- History is interpretative, and authors and sourcing are central in interpretation (consideration of bias and perspective)
- Often seems narrative without purpose and argument without explicit claims (need to see history as argument based on partial evidence; narratives are more than facts)
- Single texts are problematic (no corroboration)

Disciplinary literacy: Vocabulary Goals

- Focus is on specialized nature of vocabulary of the subjects
- Science: Greek and Latin roots (precise, dense, stable meanings that are recoverable)
- History: metaphorical terms, words/terms with a political point of view

Disciplinary Reading Goals

- The focus is on the specialized problems of a subject area
- Disciplines represent cultural differences in how information is used, the nature of language, demands for precision, etc.

Discourse Discipline focuses on mastery over specific text features or rhetorical or sociocultural conventions of the written discourse used to argue knowledge claims in a disciplinary context and its subspecialties (Berkenkotter, et al., 1988). Discourse Discipline is emphasized in the Common Core State Standards, but also in the standards of non-CCSS states (e.g., Indiana, Texas).

Content Area Reading: Vocabulary

Focus is on memorization techniques: make connections among concepts, construct graphic organizers, brainstorm, semantic maps, word sorts, rate knowledge of words, analyze semantic features of words, categorize or map words, develop synonym webs

Supporting your Child with PBIS

Supporting your Child with Personal Behavioral Interventions & Supports, *PBIS at Home*

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2020, March). Supporting families with PBIS at Home. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

Set Routines

Most children thrive when they have routines and structure. Schools set specific routines for students to follow during the day. Schools often post these schedules in classrooms or give them to students at the beginning of the school year or term.

When schools are not in session, students may have fewer predictable routines, which can increase their anxiety and challenging behaviors. To cut down on behavior problems, families and caregivers can mimic school routines with their children and set up times for learning, exercise, and play. It's helpful if these routines are similar to what students are already familiar with from school. The home schedule needs to be posted in a visible central place for all to see. The more consistent the routines and schedule can be, the easier it will be to support prosocial behavior and prevent challenging behavior in the home.

Elementary Routine Example	Secondary Routine Example
Get Ready to Learn <i>Wake up, get ready for the day, & eat breakfast</i>	Get Ready to Learn <i>Wake up, get ready for the day, & eat breakfast</i>
Morning Check-in <i>Review morning schedule & expectations. Check-in (How are you doing today? Do you have any questions?)</i>	Morning Check-in <i>Together, set schedule & expectations. Check-in (How are you doing today? Do you have any questions?)</i>
Morning Movement* <i>Consider a walk outside, yoga, “hike” inside on the stairs, etc.</i>	Morning Exercise* <i>Choose an exercise activity to do in the home or outdoors</i>
Structured Learning‡ <i>Establish times for core academic activities, like reading, math, writing</i>	Morning Distance Learning‡ <i>Support the student in engaging in distance or remote learning activities</i>
Lunch Check-in <i>Eat healthy lunch, review afternoon schedule & expectations. Check- in (How are you doing? Do you have any questions?)</i>	Lunch Check-in <i>Eat healthy lunch, discuss afternoon schedule & expectations. Check- in (How are you doing? Do you have any questions?)</i>
Afternoon Learning Activities <i>Consider a virtual field trip, art, music, science, or other fun learning activity</i>	Afternoon Distance Learning <i>Support the student in re-engaging in distance or remote learning activities</i>
Afternoon Movement <i>Consider a walk, dance party, or similar active movement options</i>	Afternoon Exercise <i>Choose an exercise activity to do in the home or outdoors</i>

Social Connection§ <i>Connect with family members or friends via social media, phone, etc.</i>	Social Connection§ <i>Connect with family members or friends via social media, phone, etc.</i>
Evening Family Time & Bedtime <i>Maintain typical evening routines to connect with each other</i>	Evening Family Time & Bedtime <i>Maintain typical evening routines to connect with each other</i>

Set Home Expectations

If your child is in a school that uses PBIS, the school will have a chart with desired behaviors, including a description of how those behaviors will look like in each setting. For example, your child’s school might ask students to “Be Respectful” (what’s expected) in the classroom (where it’s expected) by raising their hand before speaking (the desired behavior). Often these charts can be found on the school’s website homepage.

Schools that actively use PBIS might have an orientation on what behaviors are expected and where, and set a time in the beginning of the year to teach students and staff the specific behaviors. These can be adapted by families to fit the home setting. Examples of an expectations table for home and school are below.

School Example

	Classroom	Cafeteria	Dismissal
Be Respectful	Raise your hand before speaking	Throw your food away when done eating	Listen to teacher instructions
Be Responsible	Turn in your homework when it is due	Bring your lunch money to lunch	Have your backpack ready
Be Safe	Walk when holding scissors	Keep feet on the floor	Walk in the hallways

Home Example

	Virtual Classroom	Mealtime	Bedtime
Be Respectful	Keep background noise to a minimum when engaged in lesson	Be kind to family members during conversation Put your dishes in the sink	Be polite when reminded about bedtime
Be Responsible	Do your best work Turn in your homework when it is due	Wash your hands before helping with meal preparation and/or eating	Go to bed on time
Be Safe	Keep open drink away from computer keyboard	Keep feet on the floor	Wash your hands before brushing your teeth

Teach, Remind, and Reward Expected Behaviors with Positive Feedback

Just like schools that use PBIS, doing so at home is much more powerful with a plan to teach, remind, and reward behaviors using positive feedback. Emphasizing respect, responsibility, and a sense of community is important for maintaining a smooth home-school connection.

For example, consider having conversations with your child that match conversations they might have at school on respecting other individuals. If your child’s comment reflects a lack of understanding or bias, calmly discuss factual information (e.g., “Anyone can get sick.” “We are a community that takes care of each other.”). The following table shows how families and caregivers might teach, remind, and reward respectful, responsible, and safe behaviors.

	Be Respectful <i>Example: Kind Language</i>	Be Responsible <i>Example: Do Your Best Work</i>	Be Safe <i>Example: Wash Hands</i>
Teach	Describe what kind language does (and does not) sound like in your home. Demonstrate kind language and ask children to practice kind language with you.	Describe what “doing your best” means in your home. Examples might include focusing on your work, reading/listening to all instructions before beginning, asking for help when needed, and sticking with it until done. Discuss what this looks like (and does not look like) across the types of learning activities.	Describe and demonstrate how to wash hands (using various posters available from CDC). To ensure your children wash their hands for 20-30 seconds, have them pick a portion of a favorite song to sing.
Remind	At the start of the day and each new activity where kind language is expected, remind kids to be kind. For example, “Playing games together is fun, and let’s remember to be kind with our words.”	At the start of the day and at the beginning of new or difficult activities, remind children to “do their best work.”	Before meal preparation, before eating, after using the bathroom, or after touching their face, remind children to wash their hands.
Reward with Positive Feedback	When your child is kind, provide specific praise. For example, “Thank you for being kind when your sibling was having a hard time.”	When you see your child doing their best, provide specific praise. “It’s great to see you doing your best! I think you’ll be proud of your work!”	When you see your child washing their hands, provide specific praise—for example, “Awesome handwashing! Thanks for keeping our family safe.”

In addition to teaching, rewarding, and reminding, you may need to correct behavior. When a child makes an error, provide a quick correction or redirection. For example, if you observe your child showing disrespect to others:

1. Quickly correct or signal the error, (“*That was not respectful*”)
2. Re-state the expected behavior, (“*We speak kindly to each other to show respect*”)

3. Provide an opportunity for positive interaction, (*“Let’s try that again. How would you show respect?”*)
4. Provide the child positive feedback, (*“That was a kind thing to say.”*)

Redirections can be even quicker (“Remember, you need to wash your hands before coming to the table. Please go wash your hands.”). **The goal is for a correction or redirection to be calm, brief, and provide an opportunity for the child to practice the desired behavior.** In addition, it’s important to maintain a 5-to-1 ratio and use more reminders than corrections.

- **Maintain a 5-to-1 ratio.** It's easy to get into a habit of correcting, but the goal is to maintain a ratio of 5 positive interactions or praise statements for every 1 negative interaction or corrective statement.
- **Remind instead of correct.** Instead of correcting behavior after it happens, we can remind children what we would like to see before a behavior is expected. For example, we can put a sign in the bathroom near the sink to “Wash your hands.” Children can even help create these signs and brainstorm what signs might be needed.
- **To decrease undesired behavior, you can also teach alternatives.** To decrease an undesired behavior, like touching one’s face, you can teach your child to do something else. For example, children can be given a fidget that they can play with that keeps their hands away from their face or taught to use a tissue to touch their face.

Most children thrive when they have routines and structure. Schools set specific routines for students to follow during the day. Schools often post these schedules in classrooms or give them to students at the beginning of the school year or term. When schools are not in session, students may have fewer predictable routines, which can increase their anxiety and challenging behaviors. To cut down on behavior problems, families and caregivers can mimic school routines with their children and set up times for learning, exercise, and play. It’s helpful if these routines are similar to what students are already familiar with from school. The home schedule needs to be posted in a visible central place for all to see. **The more consistent the routines and schedule can be, the easier it will be to support prosocial behavior and prevent challenging behavior in the home.**

Tips and Strategies for Online Learning

This section is a brief guide that discusses barriers to on-line learning for children and children with disabilities.

National Center for Learning Disabilities (2020). *A parent's guide to virtual learning: 4 Actions to improve your child's experience with online learning*. Washington, DC: National Center for Learning Disabilities. Retrieved at: <https://www.ncld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A-Parents-Guide-to-Virtual-Learning-4-Actions-To-Improve-your-Childs-Experience-with-Online-Learning.pdf>.

COVID-19 has catapulted us all into a new reality: Workplaces are closed, social distancing is the “new normal,” and kitchen tables have replaced classrooms. The sudden shift from in-person to online learning has not been easy for all parents and kids. And for those who are entitled to (and depend upon) specialized instructional services and supports to deal with disabilities, the transition is even more complicated.

Parents and school personnel in school districts across the country are working hard (and fast!) to stay in close contact, share information and feedback, and overcome barriers to ensure that children make progress during what will likely be many weeks — perhaps even months — away from their school buildings.

Here are four things that you should know, and actions you can take, to guide your child's journey through these unusual and unprecedented times.

1. **There are best practices for children with disabilities who are engaged in online learning. Encourage your child's teacher to use them!** These practices are useful for any student in online programs, but they're particularly beneficial for students with disabilities in online programs.
 - **Face-to-face interactions are key.** It's important for children with disabilities to have virtual face-to-face interactions with their teachers. Using video will allow teachers to pick up verbal and physical cues and gauge your child's confidence and understanding during online instruction.
 - **Measuring understanding needs to be ongoing.** Frequent surveys, online quizzes, chats, and other ways to check understanding will be particularly important when using distance learning.
 - **Students need multiple ways to engage with curricula.** Online information needs to be represented in different formats, and students need options for engaging with and demonstrating their understanding. These are the hallmarks of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Encourage teachers to integrate UDL into their online instruction.
2. **Your child may need help organizing time.** Online learning provides less external structure than your child's brick-and-mortar school. Many children with learning and attention issues, particularly those who struggle with executive functioning, will need targeted help in getting and staying organized, remaining on task, and completing

assignments. Consider setting up specific spaces in the home where your child will engage in schoolwork. Create a calendar and clear expectations for work and play. Start with more rather than less structure, and make adjustments as your child establishes new routines.

3. **Your child will need new ways to access needed services.** In school, your child receives and is entitled to a number of services. These might include access to reading specialists, speech-language therapists, instructional aides, counselors, nurses, and case managers. While the COVID-19 crisis has likely caught your school off guard, the teachers and service providers will be trying to figure out the best way to adjust to the “new normal” and address each child’s needs. Look at your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan to identify the individuals providing your child’s services. Connect with them to ask about compensatory services to support your child — their plans for the short, medium, and long term— and how you might help.
4. **You and your child still have rights!** COVID-19 did not erase your child’s rights to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Schools and districts are working hard to identify how key processes that support education are going to be implemented until schools reopen their doors. These include having a way to hold IEP and 504 meetings virtually, and ensuring that your child is making progress in the core curriculum and receives needed accommodations to access information and demonstrate mastery of content. Figuring this out will take time. Be a ready and willing partner with school personnel in this process.

Tips for Online Learning Success

School of Global Education and Outreach (2020). Macomb, IL: Western Illinois University.

Retrieved at: http://www.wiu.edu/global_education/bgs/docs/Tips_for_Online_Learning_Success.pdf.

Take Responsibility

There will not be regular class attendance with an online course. You must take responsibility for your learning---to make a firm time commitment to the course and to discipline yourself in studying. You should log onto the course website at least once a day.

Be Familiar with Online Tools

Familiarize yourself with the online tools, requirements, and resources. Get comfortable using multimedia technology. Spend some time exploring the website to become familiar with the various features.

Schedule Your Work and Work Your Schedule

It is important to read the entire course syllabus before starting the course to learn what will be required and what deadlines you will need to meet during the semester. The deadlines will help you set realistic study goals to complete the course assignments and tests on time. Divide the coursework into manageable segments. Set weekly and monthly goals to insure you stay focused. It is important to set aside a specific time each day to devote to the course. It is a good idea to set up a calendar; block off daily hours to focus on the course segments and note your goals, the

days when projects are due, and when tests are scheduled. Maintain a balance between work, family, and school obligations.

Designate a Study Area

Arrange to have a private space to study where you can shut the door, leave your papers scattered around, and have quiet time to concentrate.

Know Your Learning Style and Use It

Prior to starting the course, make a realistic assessment of your skills and knowledge and the conditions under which you are most likely to learn. Know your strengths, limitations, and “how” you prefer to learn.

Communicate with the Instructor

You should contact the instructor on a regular basis, especially if you have any questions or concerns. If you find yourself having difficulty with any aspect of the course, you should immediately communicate in a concise manner with the instructor. At a minimum, you should plan to discuss your progress with the instructor at various times during the semester.

Have Good Writing Skills

With an online course almost all communication will be through writing. Be aware the usual nonverbal communication mechanisms that show you may be confused, having problems, attempting humor, etc., will not be available in electronic communication—for this reason it will be especially important that you be able to accurately express yourself by writing clearly and succinctly. If you are concerned that your current skills may not be “college level”, act soon to seek help to improve your writing.

Prepare for Assignments and Tests

When studying the course material, take notes. From the different sources of information that you are studying, try to imagine what questions will be on the tests. Before taking a test, you should be sure you understand what the covered material was attempting to convey.

Periodically Evaluate Your Own Progress

Review the course objectives and standards often to determine if you are following them accurately. Keep a positive outlook when receiving feedback and in your attitude toward successfully completing the course.

Participate in Discussion Groups

Participating in online discussion groups will give you access to other students taking the course. Contribute any ideas, comments, etc., that you might have about the course material and read those submitted by classmates. This will give you perspectives different from your own and the instructor’s.

Be Polite and Respectful

Even though you may remain anonymous in an online course, your fellow students are real people. To be polite, respectful, productive, and supportive will help promote a positive online experience for everyone involved.

Have Fun

Enjoy your course and the knowledge you are gaining. Connect with classmates and engage them in relevant and meaningful discussions. **Take time to enjoy learning!**

Seven Steps to Adapt Your Learning to Remote, Online Courses

The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning. (2020). *Seven steps to adapt your learning to remote, online courses*. Princeton, NJ: Frist Campus Center, Princeton University. Retrieved at: <https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/node/3301>

Over more than a dozen years you have developed, often without much conscious awareness, effective ways of learning in person. Upon reflection, you will probably notice that during that time certain courses, subjects or teaching styles required you to adjust your approach to learning. During this time of great adjustment (for both students and instructors) give yourself the time and opportunities to adapt. By being reflective and strategic you can make the necessary adaptations and achieve your goals and learn skills and strategies that will benefit you in years to come.

1. Notice what's different and unfamiliar about how you are being taught and the kinds of assignments you are given. New and unfamiliar tasks and ways of teaching may require new methods of learning. To be more effective and efficient follow the steps below to get in synch with your instructor.
2. Strive to understand why these changes have been made, why the course has been designed as it has. This will help you align your efforts with the aims of your instructor(s).
3. Clarify your instructors' expectations for students. Read and listen carefully to establish a concrete and specific understanding of what you are expected to do before, during and after class sessions and on assignments. Ask specific questions to get additional information.
4. Identify what is difficult or challenging about how you are being taught and expected to learn. What makes it hard; what are the learning demands? Generate ideas for how to address them and experiment.
5. Periodically, reflect on your approach to the course (study strategies, time management, etc.) and discuss with your classmates or instructor (or a learning consultant) how it is working effectively and not.
6. Be alert to problems with access to course materials, problems with the LMS (e.g. Blackboard or Canvas), etc. remembering that your instructors are having to make big

adjustments, too. Communicate any issues you observe to your instructors in a timely and helpful way so they can address them for you and the entire class.

7. Be prepared to adapt to new developments by applying this process multiple times. Expect some trial and error, but continue to attend to and refine your methods and processes of engaging with and learning from remote, online instruction.

Supplemental Resources & References

This section serves as a loosely structured resource that includes topics such as learning websites, books to engage boys in reading, books to empower girls' books for parents and caretakers that all support student growth.



**Supplemental
Resources**



References

[Back to Menu](#)

Supplemental Resources

Cool Learning Sites for Kids

Arthur: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/arthur/>

Barney: <http://www.barneyonline.com>

Disney: <http://disney.go.com/park/bases/familybase/today/>

Dr. Seuss's Seussville: <http://www.randomhouse.com/seussville/university/>

PBS Homepage: <http://www.pbs.org/kids/>

Children's Television Workshop: <http://www.ctw.org>

Smithsonian Institution–National Zoo: <http://www.si.edu/natzoo/>

NASA Space Place: <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/>

NASA at Home for Kids and Families: <https://www.nasa.gov/nasa-at-home-for-kids-and-families>

NASA Kid's Club: <https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/text/index.html>

National Geographic for Kids: <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>

YouTube Kids: <https://www.youtubekids.com/>

Cool Web Sites for Parents and Caregivers

Children's Software Revue: <http://www.childrenssoftware.com/>

Family Education Network: <http://www.familyeducation.com>

Kidsource: <http://www.kidsource.com>

Parent Soup: <http://www.parentsoup.com>

5 Resources for Parents Who Are Stumped by Math Homework:

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/learning-toolkit-blog/parent-resources-for-helping-with-math-homework.html>

Books to Increase Reading Engagement for Boys

[I Like You But I Love Me](#), by Common, illustrated by Lorraine West

[Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry](#), by Scott Reynolds Nelson with Marc Aronson Julian, Secret Agent, by Ann Cameron

[Just the Two of Us](#), by Will Smith with pictures by Kadir Nelson

[No Boys Allowed!](#), by Christine Taylor-Butler illustrated by Mark Page

[Michael's Golden Rules](#), by Deloris Jordan with Roslyn M. Jordan Illustrated by Kadir Nelson

[Kickoff!](#), by Tiki Barber and Ronde Barber with Paul Mantell Kevin and His Dad

[Hoops](#), by Walter Dean Myers,

[Goal line.](#) by Tiki Barber and Ronde Barber with Paul Mantell Kevin and His Dad

[An Inside Look at the U.S. Navy Seals.](#) by Joe Funk

[Shaolin Tiger: Samurai Kids.](#) by Sandy Fussell, illustrated by Rhain Nest James

[White Crane: Samurai Kids.](#) by Sandy Fussell, illustrated by Rhain Nest James

[A Nation's Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend of Joe Lewis.](#) by Matt De La Pena, Illustrated by Kadir Nelson.

[You Can Do It!](#), by Tony Dungy, Illustrated by Amy June Bates

[We Are the Ship](#), words and paintings by Kadir Nelson

[Great African-American Writers](#), Compilation

[Black Pioneers of Science and Invention](#), by Haber, Louis

[Best of the best](#), by Tim Green

[Ron's big mission.](#) New York: Scholastic Books. Blue, R. & Tate, D. Illustrated by Don, Tate

[Our Children Can Soar: A celebration of Rosa, Barack and the Pioneers of Change.](#) by Michelle Cook, illustrated by Leo Dillon, Diane Dillon and Eric Velasquez.

[The Boy who Harnesses The Wind.](#) Kamkwamba, William and Mealer B., Illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon.

[The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963](#), by Christopher Paul Curtis

Adolescent Boys

[You Hear Me?: Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys](#) edited by Betsy Franco

[Bad Boy: A Memoir](#) by Walter Dean Myers

[Bang!](#), by Sharon G. Flake

[Somewhere in the Darkness](#), by Walter Dean Myers

Books to Empower and Inspire Girls

[Don't Say Ain't](#) by Irene Smalls illustrated by Colin Bootman

[Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters](#) by John Steptoe

[I Love My Hair](#) by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

[True Friends](#) by Stephanie Perry Moore

[Her Stories African American Folktales, Fairy Tales, and True Tales](#) told by Virginia Hamilton with illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon

[Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel](#) by Patricia Storage, illustrated by Raul Colon

[Sweet, Sweet Memory](#) by Jacqueline Woodson, Illustrations by Floyd Cooper

[Grace for President](#) by Dipucchio and Pham.

[Our Children Can Soar: A celebration of Rosa, Barack and the Pioneers of Change.](#) by Michelle Cook, illustrated by Leo Dillon, Diane Dillon and Eric Velasquez.

[Ellington Was Not a Street](#), by Ntozake Shange

[The Girl Who Spun Gold](#), by Virginia Hamilton illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon

[Girls Hold Up This World](#), by Jada Pinkett Smith photographs by Donyell Kennedy-McCullough

[Gloria's Way](#), by Ann Cameron and Lis Toft

Books for Adolescent Girls

[Math Doesn't Suck](#) by Danica McKellar

[Kiss My Math](#). Danica McKellar

[Hot X: Algebra](#) Exposed by Danica McKellar

[Maya's Divided](#) World by Gloria Velasquez

The Legend of Buddy Bush by Shelia Moses

[Color me Dark: The Diary of Nellie Lee Love, The Great Migration North](#) by Patricia, McKissack,

[Run for Your Life](#) by Marilyn Levy

[Double Dutch: How Long Can Delia Hide her Secret?](#) by Sharon Draper

Books for Parents

[Spark Your Child's Success in Math and Science: Practical Advice for Parents](#), by Barber, Jacqueline, Parizeau, Nicole, Bergman, Lincoln and Lima, Patricia.

[Science Fair Projects: Helping Your Child Create a Super Science Fair Project](#). Dana Barry and Cynthia Holzschuher

[How to Talk Dinosaur With Your Child](#), by Q. L. Pearce

[IDEAAAS: Sourcebook for Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education](#), by Barbara, Walthall

[Everything You Need to Ace Math in One Big Fat Notebook: The Complete Middle School Study Guide](#), by Ouida Newton, Altair Peterson and Brian Quest

Resource Links for Parents

[A Family Guide to Science](#), American Association for the Advancement of Science.

[Ten Questions to Ask Your Neighborhood School about Local Science Education](#). American Association for the Advancement of Science.

[Every Child a Scientist](#), National Research Council

[New Formulas for America's Workforce: Girls in Science and Engineering](#), National Science Foundation.

[Help Your Child Explore Science](#), National Science Teachers Association.

Manipulatives

[School zone multiplication flash cards 0-12 ages 8-up](#), Scholastic Teacher Resources

[School zone sight words flash cards ages 5-up](#). Scholastic Teacher Resources

[Smart sums addition smart station kit](#). Greg, Tang

[Smart sums subtraction smart station kit](#). Greg, Tang

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Office of K-12 Outreach College of Education— Michigan State University Collective Capacity Building and Leadership Development

The Office of K-12 Outreach, under the leadership of Director Bryan Beverly, Ph.D., has unmatched experience in developing and implementing customized support for schools and districts in Michigan that seek to turnaround their schools and rapidly improve student achievement. Our unique field-oriented service organization within the university brings a 20-year history of collaboration with schools and districts across the state. K-12 Outreach has experience working with school districts on topics ranging from staff professional development to central office transformations, to equity, and it is available in this new technology-driven environment to help districts plan for school re-opening.

K-12 Outreach is available to help districts plan for school re-opening.

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