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Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



Your child's vision plays a vital role in school success

You and your child may not always see eye-to-eye about school, but have you ever thought about how well he sees at school? According to research, kids with vision problems may struggle more than their peers. If your child can't see the board—or what's on a worksheet—he's likely to fall behind. And that means his grades can suffer.

Unfortunately, kids don't always know that they can't see well. They simply rub their eyes, squint and try their best to see. So get your child's eyes examined yearly.

To protect his eyesight overall:

- **Provide good light.** Be sure his reading lamp is bright enough. If it's too dim, he'll strain to see the page.
- **Build in breaks.** If your child spends long stretches in front of a screen, have him take frequent 10-minute

breaks. Experts believe too much screen time leads to blurry vision and problems with focusing.

- **Provide sunglasses.** Bright sunlight can damage kids' eyes. Your child may not think to wear sunglasses, so remind him to put them on.
- **Commit to safety.** Does your child play sports? Make sure he wears the proper protective eye wear, such as safety glasses or swim goggles.
- **Serve healthy foods.** Good vision starts with good nutrition, so feed your child a variety of healthy foods. From leafy greens to fortified milk, nutritious foods are proven to support strong minds, bodies and eyes.

Source: S.L.J. White and others, "Vision screening outcomes of Grade 3 children in Australia: Differences in academic achievement," *International Journal of Educational Research*, nswc.com/elem_vision.

Experts share ways to reduce screen time



The time kids spend staring at screens—watching TV, playing video games, going online—can affect their grades. As a matter of fact, research shows that kids who use these media the most tend to be the poorest readers.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents of children ages six and older place consistent limits on the amount of time their kids spend with digital media. However, many kids say there are no rules about screen time in their homes.

Experts advise parents to:

- **Establish screen-free areas,** such as in kids' bedrooms.
- **Designate screen-free times,** such as during meals and while in the car.
- **Offer alternatives.** Go biking together. Play cards. Learn a new craft. Show your child that there are plenty of ways to have fun—and engage her brain—without sitting in front of a screen.

Source: "American Academy of Pediatrics Announces New Recommendations for Children's Media Use," American Academy of Pediatrics, nswc.com/elem_screens.

Boost writing skills and express thanks with illustrated stories



The children's book *The Secret of Saying Thanks* ends with this thought: "We don't give thanks because we're

happy. We are happy because we give thanks."

November is the perfect month to focus on giving thanks. As your child thinks about the reasons he is thankful, have him put his thoughts in writing. Here's how:

1. Brainstorm with your child.

Ask him to name one thing he is thankful for. He might say, "I am thankful for our dog."

2. Have your child write that statement at the top of a piece of paper. Underneath it, he should write down all the reasons he is thankful for his dog. For example,

he may love the fact that the dog sleeps on his bed. He may like the dog's curly tail. He may love to take the dog on walks.

3. Have your child draw a picture at the bottom of the page.

During the month, repeat this activity with everyone in the family. Post these illustrated stories for the whole family to read.

Source: R. Fletcher and J. Portalupi, *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8*, Stenhouse Publishers.

"Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

—Melody Beattie

Simple strategies can make reading exciting for your child



Strong reading skills are beneficial in every school subject. But experts say that to build reading abilities, children must

want to read. Unfortunately, many children just aren't interested.

To show your child that reading is enjoyable and rewarding:

- **Listen to audiobooks.** This is a great way to show a reluctant reader how interesting books can be. Young children may enjoy recordings made by parents. They can follow along with the book while listening.
- **Sign your child up for a pen pal.** Kids love receiving mail and learning about life in other countries. Ask your child's teacher or a librarian about how to get involved.

- **Take a field trip.** Challenge your child to research attractions in your area, such as museums and parks. Then ask her to be your tour guide as she shares with you what she's learned.
- **Follow current events.** Is there a developing news story that interests your child? Read the latest reports in the paper or online together each night.
- **Give reading coupons.** Show your child that you think reading is special by giving her reading coupons. Some might be for 30 minutes of reading with you. Others might be good for a trip to the bookstore or an extra trip to the library to select a book. Reading coupons also make great rewards for good behavior.

Are you helping your child have great attendance?



Being in school every day—and on time—will help your child have a successful school year.

Are you reinforcing strong attendance habits? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___ **1. Have you told** your child that you expect her to go to school every day? If you tell her it's important to you, it will become important to her.

___ **2. Do you ignore** weak excuses? Not feeling like getting out of bed isn't an acceptable reason to stay home.

___ **3. Do you keep** your child home when she's sick? Reducing the spread of illness helps others avoid missing school.

___ **4. Do you try** to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours? Vacations should be scheduled outside of school hours, too.

___ **5. Do you help** your child set the alarm clock earlier if she has trouble getting to school on time?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are supporting your child's attendance. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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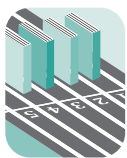
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Habits at home can help your child thrive in school and life



Every family—and every child—is different, but there are ways all families can set their children up for success. Studies show

that kids are more likely to achieve in elementary school and beyond when their parents give them the tools to succeed. To help your child:

- **Assign chores.** Kids who have responsibilities around the house learn how to be responsible. Give your child a list of weekly tasks to complete. He may grumble, but don't give in.
- **Teach social skills.** Your child's success in life hinges on more than grades; it centers on his ability to get along with others. Model good behavior—like cooperation and courtesy.
- **Set the bar high.** Expect your child to do well, and he'll rise to the

occasion. Don't demand perfect grades, but do insist he work to the best of his ability. And praise him when he tries hard—even if he falls short. When you show him you believe in him, he'll believe in himself.

- **Nurture your relationship.** You are your child's parent, not his friend. But you're also his ally. So, make time to have fun together! Share a hobby. Play catch in the yard. Never let your child forget you're on the same team.
- **Take care of yourself.** If you're always stressed, your child will be, too. Carve out time to relax, exercise, or curl up with a good book. A calm, peaceful home starts with you.

Source: R. Gillett and Y. Han, "Parents of successful kids have these 12 things in common," *Business Insider*, nswc.com/elem_habits.

Parents must encourage their children to develop self-respect



Children who are disrespectful often lack something they desperately need: self-respect. If they don't value

themselves, they will find it hard to value and respect other people. They will also have trouble following rules.

But how can you encourage self-respect and how does it develop? Self-respect comes from:

- **Competence.** It feels great to be good at things. Give your child opportunities to learn and practice new skills—everything from reading to playing sports to doing chores.
- **Accomplishments.** Notice and compliment your child's progress. "You've read three books this week. I'm impressed!"
- **Confidence.** It helps to have parents who stay positive through challenges. Display a "You can do it" attitude. Help your child see mistakes as opportunities to learn.
- **Freedom.** Give your child some independence. Let her make age-appropriate choices, too. For example, "Would you like to organize your closet today or tomorrow?"
- **Support.** Show that you accept, appreciate and love your child for who she is and what she believes. Ask about her day. Listen to her answers. Help her solve problems.
- **Imitation.** If you have self-respect, your child is more likely to have it as well. Be kind to yourself and believe in your worth.

Q: My child reads the chapter before test time—but he can't always recall the facts! How can I help him improve his memory?

Questions & Answers

A: There are many memorization tricks that may help your child remember facts. Here are a few:

- **Acronyms.** Your child can make a word out of the first letter of terms to be memorized, such as HOMES for the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).
- **Sentences.** Help your child use the first letter of each word to make a silly sentence, such as "My very educated mother just served us noodles" for the planets in order of their distance from the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.
- **Grouping.** Have your child group things into manageable chunks. Instead of memorizing the capitals of every state or province in the country, he should divide them into geographic regions and memorize each region.
- **Recitation.** Have your child repeat facts out loud and focus on the meaning of what he is saying.
- **Rhymes.** Have your child think of rhymes about facts, such as "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue."
- **Images.** Your child can draw or imagine a picture of what he's studying. Then he can recall that image during the test.
- **Personalization.** Have your child relate the information to his own life. An important date in history might also be a relative's birthday.
- **Singing.** Your child can replace words in a familiar song with facts he needs to remember.

It Matters: Homework

Help your child make homework time effective



Don't let your elementary schooler's homework cause headaches! To take the hassle out of homework:

- **Make school the top priority.** If your child can't finish all of his homework because of his piano lessons or soccer practice, there is a problem—and it isn't the homework. Adjust his schedule so that schoolwork comes first.
- **Don't do your child's work.** Not only is it wrong to do his homework for him, it may make him feel dumb. "Dad doesn't think I can handle my math homework. I must not be very good at math."
- **Remember what it's all about.** Homework helps your child practice what he's learning. His assignments and projects don't need to be perfect.
- **Expect some frustration.** Your child shouldn't melt down over every assignment, but a little homework-related complaining is normal. Take it in stride. Even cries of "I hate school!" will pass.
- **Show interest.** Don't hover while your child works, but let him know you care about what he's doing. If he's writing a history report, for example, show some enthusiasm. "You sure know a lot about the Civil War. How fascinating!"
- **Expect your child to help himself.** Encourage him to call a classmate if he has a question about an assignment. This shifts the responsibility away from you and onto him—where it belongs.

Understand the four reasons teachers assign homework

Understanding the goal behind a homework assignment can make the assignment more rewarding—for students and parents. Teachers usually give homework for one of four reasons:

1. **Preparation.** Some assignments get your child ready for upcoming topics. If the teacher plans a lesson about the Civil War for instance, your child may be asked to read a chapter in her social studies textbook beforehand. Preparation homework typically requires reading or research.
2. **Practice.** Doing the same kind of work repeatedly—writing spelling words or solving similar math problems—reinforces your child's skills. This may sometimes seem tedious, but it works.
3. **Demonstration.** It's challenging for kids to use different skills to show what they've learned. Projects such as preparing an oral report, building a model,



writing a paper or putting on a play encourage creativity and let students demonstrate their understanding of concepts.

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

Teach your child to pay close attention to textbook graphics



Many students pay little or no attention to the images in their textbooks. However, photos, maps, graphs and illustrations can give students a clearer idea of what a chapter is about.

Before your child reads a chapter, have him look at the visuals and answer these questions:

- **What does the graphic show?** He should explain in his own words.
- **What details do you see?**
- **What do you think this chapter is about based on this illustration?**
- **Why do you think the authors included this graphic?**

Once your child has studied the images, have him read the chapter. He is likely to understand more and remember more of what he reads.