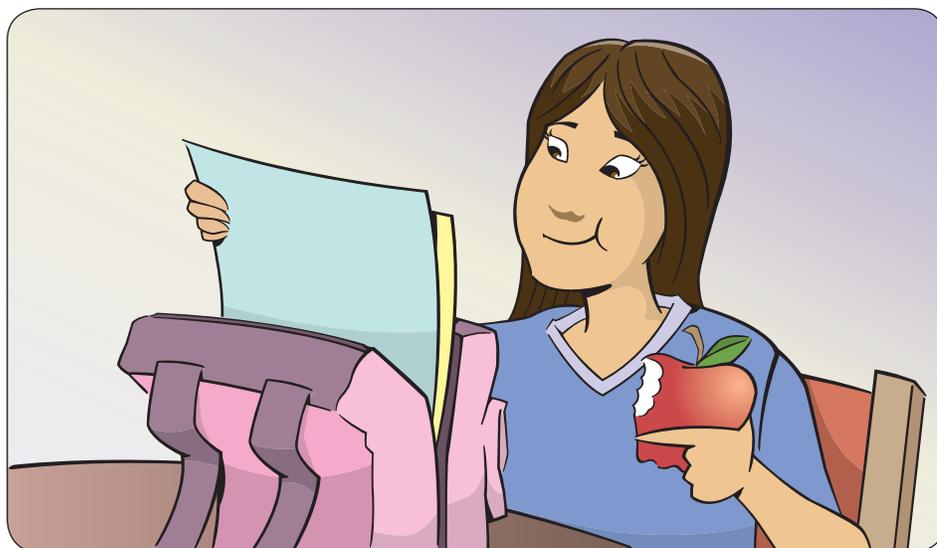


# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup> make the difference!

Quashnet School



## Research links sleep habits, diet and exercise to school success

It's time for school, and your child is ready to go. She has her jacket, glasses, backpack and homework. But is she *really* ready to learn?

That depends on many factors, including her diet, sleep habits and exercise routines. Research shows all of these have an impact on learning.

It's important for families to:

- **Plan nutritious meals** and snacks. Eating well helps kids stay healthy, which means they miss less school. It also provides the energy kids need to do their best.
- **Make sure your child** gets enough rest. Experts say school-age kids need at least 10 hours of sleep, and some need more. Late bedtimes make it hard to wake up

and be on time. Lack of sleep also hurts focus and learning. Aim for a consistent bedtime that allows plenty of time for sleep. Make nighttime routines relaxing, too. Choose activities such as reading and chatting instead of watching TV or using a computer.

- **Be active together.** It's one thing to say, "It's time to exercise." It's another to say, "Let's play a family game of tag!" Help your child see that exercise is fun, and keep in mind that it builds strength and well-being for school, sports and other activities. In addition to playing games, put exercise on your family schedule. Take walks. Ride bicycles. Play music while cleaning up.

## Set clear limits on your child's media use



By the age of nine, children are already "tuned in." They are fans of actors and music

groups. They love to play online games. And they may be seeing and hearing things you don't know about—and wouldn't approve of if you did.

Now is the time to set clear limits on what your child can and can't do online. Here's how:

- **Set and enforce limits.** Kids this age should spend no more than a total of two hours a day in front of a screen.
- **Be aware** of what your child does online. Keep the computer in a central location so you can monitor his activity.
- **Record favorite TV shows** and let your child watch them without the ads.
- **Be sure your child** understands that your family rules apply even when he's at a friend's house.
- **Be a role model.** If you are always checking your phone for emails and texts, it's hard to set limits for your child.

**Source:** J.P. Steyer, *Talking Back to Facebook*, Simon and Schuster.

## Five fun activities to schedule with your child this month



Fun makes family memories. And many of the most enjoyable ways to spend time with your child don't take a lot of planning—or cost much money.

Here are five fun things you and your child can try this month:

- 1. Prepare favorite family food.** Help your child learn more about your heritage by preparing a traditional food.
- 2. Try a new vegetable.** The next time you're at the store, have your child choose a new vegetable she's never eaten. Prepare it together.
- 3. Talk to a relative** about family history. Help your child develop a

set of questions so she can learn more about her heritage.

- 4. Give back.** Find one volunteer activity you and your child can do together. Even if you just have an hour to give, your child makes you a “force multiplier.” Together, you can get more accomplished.
- 5. Pretend you're a tourist.** What's one place you'd take a visitor to see in your town? Go there with your child.

“What a child doesn't receive he can seldom later give.”

—P.D. James

## Teach your child the importance of losing & winning gracefully



Competition can be a good thing. It can teach kids how to win and lose. It can encourage kids to do their best.

But some kids are just too competitive. They treat every board game like it's World War III. They cheat. They throw tantrums. They are rude to other players.

Could your child be too competitive? A poor competitor:

- **Gets very angry** if he is losing.
- **Has a tantrum** in the middle of a game.
- **Throws things** (soccer balls, cards, game pieces).
- **Cries after any loss.**
- **Makes threats** to other players.

If you see these signs, it's time to take action. Start by talking with your child. Tell him that winning and losing are both part of life.

Say you want to help him become a better winner and a better loser.

Then talk about what makes a good winner or loser. What have other kids done that he admires? What do they do that bugs him? Help him see that he may be doing some of the same things he doesn't like in others.

Set up chances to compete at home. When your child wins, don't fuss too much. Pick out one thing your child did well in winning the game. “You took a risk on that hand. But it paid off.”

Sometimes, of course, your child will lose. Again, look for something positive to say, such as, “That was a good strategy.” Show your child by your actions how to be a good loser and winner.

Source: B. Conner, *Everyday Opportunities for Extraordinary Parenting*, Sourcebooks, Inc.

## Are you making the most of your read-aloud time?



Reading aloud doesn't have to be a one-way street. Parents who encourage children to read aloud *to them* help their children become stronger readers.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are making the most of your child's reading time:

- 1. Do you set aside** time each day for your child to read aloud?
- 2. Do you make reading** time low-stress? Choose a time when you can give your child your full attention.
- 3. Do you let your child** catch mistakes himself? Don't leap in right away if your child mispronounces a word.
- 4. Do you switch books** if there are too many words your child doesn't know? Nothing succeeds like success.
- 5. Do you talk about the books** once you finish them? Which parts did he like? Does he want to read another book like this?

### How well are you doing?

Each *yes* strengthens your child's reading skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School  
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# Use positive discipline with research-proven approaches



Discipline is not the same as punishment. In fact, it's almost the opposite! One of the most important parts of discipline is encouraging good behavior. After teaching your child to say *please*, you probably complimented his success: "Thank you for being polite!" It's critical to continue this process throughout your child's life.

According to experts at Yale University, certain discipline approaches help families most. Research shows it works to:

- **Focus on changing** two or three behaviors at a time. Decide what you'd like your child to accomplish first, such as doing homework at a certain time each day.
- **Explain how** you want your child to behave. Instead of saying, "Be nice," provide details. "When Jake asks for a turn with your toy, please give him one."

- **Be a good role model.** You might share with someone and then ask your child to do the same with his sibling.
- **Take steps toward success.** Some things are too difficult to master all at once. If you want your child to read for 20 minutes each night, start with a shorter time and slowly build up to 20 minutes.
- **Give frequent, specific compliments.** Practice good behavior often, and keep saying what you liked. "Awesome! You shared with Jake the first time he asked!"
- **Show enthusiasm** with words and actions. There's a big difference between saying "Good job" and saying "SUPER!" with a smile and a high five. Kids respond to parents' happiness and pride!

**Source:** "How to Use Attention and Praise Effectively," Yale Parenting Center, <https://sites.google.com/site/escobedocounselor/extra-credit/classroom-news/howtouseattentionandpraiseeffectively>.

# Look for signs of stress that may be causing school problems



Your child used to love school, but now she often says she's too sick to go. Her grades are starting to slip. She doesn't spend time with girls who used to be her friends.

Your child may be experiencing stress. It can sometimes be hard to catch the signs that children are feeling stressed out, but dramatic changes in behavior are often a clue.

If you suspect stress is causing some of your child's school-related issues, you should:

- **Encourage her to talk** about what she's feeling.

- **Help her think** about times when she has overcome a tough situation. Remind her that you are on her side.
- **Teach and model** healthy responses to stress. Say, "I'm going for a walk to let off some steam. Want to come?"
- **Encourage her** to get plenty of exercise and rest.
- **Contact her teacher** with concerns. See if there are things you can do together to work on the problem.

**Source:** "Stress in Children and Adolescents: Tips for Parents," National Association of School Psychologists, [www.nasponline.org/families/stress08.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/families/stress08.pdf).

**Q:** My daughter and I are locked in a power struggle over just about everything. Lately, it's about cleaning her room. She refuses to pick up after herself, and now the room is a disaster. She can't find her homework. She can't find anything to wear in the morning. She says, "It's my room. I can do what I want." How can we stop fighting all the time?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** This battle is about more than just a tidy room. It's time to help your daughter remember that there are still boundaries and rules she needs to follow. Those are lessons that her teachers—and her future bosses—will also be glad she's learned.

While it may be her room, it's your house and you set the rules for the family. The best approach might be a combination of help and consequences.

By now, cleaning her room may be overwhelming to her. So set a timer and a small goal. "I'll help you pick up all the clothes for the next 15 minutes." Or choose one part of the room and go at it together. The key here is to help her and not do the job yourself.

Finally, think about consequences. Is there something she wants you to do? Perhaps give her a ride to a friend's house? Say you're happy to do it—*after* the clothes are picked up. Don't engage in a power struggle after that. Once she meets her part of the bargain, you'll be happy to drive her.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Homework

## Planning ahead makes preparing for tests a breeze



Your child's teacher announces there will be a test next week. "Please start preparing now," she tells families. What

steps should you follow?

It's a good idea to:

- **Clarify what will be tested.** You can check with your child, the teacher's web page and the teacher herself if necessary. Note what kind of test it will be (fill in the blanks, multiple choice, etc. ).
- **Make a plan.** Studying works best when it's done over time—not at the last minute. Write several study sessions on the calendar and make sure an adult will be available to supervise.
- **Think of fun ways** to reinforce material. You might make flash cards (on paper or online), print out blank maps from the Internet, quiz each other and take a practice test.
- **Encourage good habits.** In addition to doing homework and studying, kids need rest and nourishment to do their best in school. A regular bedtime and healthy meals go a long way!
- **Make attendance a priority.** It's hard for kids to keep up when they miss school or arrive late. Reduce stress on test day by being ready early. Let your child start the day relaxed.
- **Ease anxiety.** Make plenty of positive comments. "You've got these answers memorized! You'll do well!" There's no need to pressure your child. Support and preparation are all she needs!

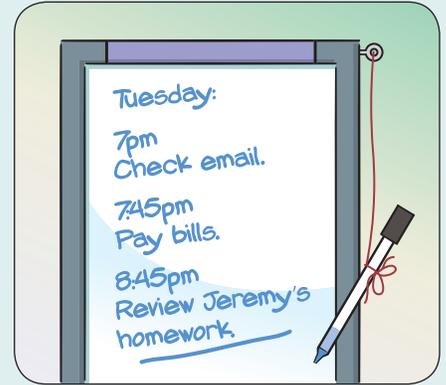
## Stay involved and check your child's homework every day!

**B**y the end of third grade, many parents stop checking their children's homework. They worry that they can't remember how to multiply fractions or because they never took a course in science.

And because they can't correct their child's homework, they stop asking about it. But checking on homework is still important.

All you really need to stay involved with homework is to take an interest in what your child is learning. Here's how:

- **Set aside time every day** to look at your child's homework.
- **Ask your child** to tell you about his homework.



- **Praise neat and completed work.**

Remember, your daily interest will encourage your child to work hard and complete his homework every day.

## Show real enthusiasm about your child's science fair project



It's time for the science fair. "Wonderful!" you say while thinking, "Uh oh. How much work will this involve for me?" Take heart. A good science project shouldn't be overwhelming. Instead, it should be manageable, fun and a great learning experience.

To encourage and maintain your child's enthusiasm:

- **Define "experiment."** Doing a *demonstration* (showing how something works) is different from doing an *experiment* (testing how change affects something). It's fun to ask "What if?" and experiment to get results!
- **Consider your child's interests.** What does she love? Cooking?

Insects? Weather? Look for intriguing, educational experiments at the library and online.

- **Be creative.** There are plenty of popular kids' experiments, but your child doesn't have to do them the same way as everyone else. Brainstorm about interesting twists on traditional science projects.
- **Supervise.** Help your child make a step-by-step plan for completing her project on time. Put deadlines on the calendar. Then provide encouragement and advice while *she* does the work.

**Source:** "Science Fair Secrets for Parents," Steve Spangler Science, [www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/science-fair-survival](http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/science-fair-survival).