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# Elementary School Parents<sup>®</sup>

*make the difference!*

Mr. Shields  
Mr. Killinger



## Support your child as the end of the school year approaches

**B**y May, some students act like summer vacation has already started. They “forget” to do their homework. They stop giving their best effort and start avoiding anything that seems difficult or challenging.

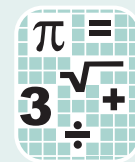
But the school year isn’t over yet. Kids need to stay focused on learning until the last day of school. Here’s how to help your child:

- **Review past homework papers,** quizzes and tests. Use them to talk with your child about how much he has learned this year. Having these papers close at hand will also be useful as he studies for end-of-year tests.
- **Shape year-end learning** around your child’s interests. If he has

one more book report due, suggest he choose a book on a topic he loves. If he has a social studies project, he should focus on something he is interested in learning more about.

- **Help your child manage** big end-of-year projects. Long-range assignments can be overwhelming. So, in addition to helping your child break a big project down into smaller steps, encourage him to apply this rule of thumb: Move the deadline for finishing any project earlier by two days. If a report is due on Wednesday, your child should plan to get it finished by Monday. That way, he’ll have a cushion if something comes up.

## Look for lines of symmetry in nature



If you fold a picture of a butterfly in half, you’ll notice that the two halves match exactly. That’s because butterflies, like many other things in nature, are *symmetrical*.

Showing your child how to look for lines of symmetry is a great way to help her recognize patterns. It is also a fun family activity that can give your child a new way of looking at nature.

To get started:

- **Look for natural objects** that are symmetrical and take photos of them. Flowers, leaves, spider webs and shells may all have these lines.
- **Have your child predict** where the line of symmetry will be. Then fold along that line to see if the two sides match up exactly.
- **Find lines of symmetry** in other places, such as in the pages of a magazine or book. Remember that lines of symmetry can be vertical (as in the letter A) or horizontal (as in the letter B). They can even be diagonal. Sometimes, a figure may have more than one line of symmetry.

# Discover ways to build family time into your daily schedule



To reach their full potential in school and in life, kids need frequent, meaningful, undivided attention from caring adults. But finding this quality time can be challenging.

To build more family time into your busy schedule:

- **Gather for meals.** Sit-down meals help kids and parents connect, and can lead to great conversations. Strive to eat at least one meal together every day.
- **Volunteer.** If your child is involved in a club, team or other group activity, offer to help out. This is a great opportunity to learn more about your child and his peers.
- **Get moving.** It's important to squeeze exercise into your routine. Be active as a family—

go for walks, play tag or kick a soccer ball around.

- **Manage screen time.** Simply limiting TV time and putting down your smartphone can result in several hours of free time each week.
- **Write it on the calendar.** Treat family time like an appointment. If you can, schedule some one-on-one activities that appeal to each child.

**“Think how really precious is the time you have to spend, whether it’s at work or with your family. Every minute should be enjoyed and savored.”**

—Earl Nightingale

# Take advantage of these fun May learning opportunities



There's more to May than Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Victoria Day. Here are some other occasions that offer fun

learning opportunities for you and your child:

- **May 1**—Mother Goose Day. Read favorite Mother Goose rhymes together.
- **May 4**—National Weather Observers Day. Go outside and observe the clouds together. Or make a collage of weather-related pictures cut from magazines.
- **May 5**—Cinco de Mayo. Learn more about this celebration that honors the rich culture of Mexican-Americans and Hispanics, and enjoy some Mexican food!
- **May 16**—Armed Forces Day. Have your child write a letter to thank someone for their military service. Check out Operation Gratitude at [www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks](http://www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks) for more ways to show your appreciation.
- **May 18**—International Museum Day. Talk with your child about the importance of museums. Visit one online or in person.
- **May 21**—On this day in 1881, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross. Head to the library or go online to learn more about this compassionate leader of charitable causes.
- **May 30**—Water a Flower Day. Celebrate by planting flowers outside or in containers.

# Are you helping your child prepare for year-end tests?



The end of the year often means lots of tests for students. Are you preparing your child to do her best on them?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you write down test dates** on your family calendar and avoid planning big activities on the day before a test?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage** your child to study a little each day instead of cramming the night before a test? Research shows this is the best way to learn and remember facts.

\_\_\_ **3. Do you make sure** your child gets a good night's sleep and eats a healthy breakfast before a big test?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your child to wear comfortable clothing and dress in layers on test days?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you tell your child** that you have confidence in her and know she will give her best effort?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're giving your child the support she needs to do her best on tests. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

**Elementary School**  
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# Teach your dawdling child to be more responsible with time



It's a busy morning. You need to leave the house on time but your child seems to be stuck in slow-motion.

Adults live in a time-oriented world. You check the time on your watch. You glance at the clock on your phone to be sure you're at work on time. But children often view time as more flexible.

To help your child become more aware of and responsible with time:

- **Be a good role model.** When you're in a mad dash to get out the door, you're not showing your child the importance of getting ready early.
- **Build in routines that help.** Take five minutes in the evening to prepare for the next day. Create a "launch pad" by your door where

your child can put all those things (backpack, gym shoes, permission slips) that she will need.

- **Don't nag.** You'll make your child anxious—and you probably won't make her hurry up. Instead, look for concrete actions that will actually make a difference. Help her put on her coat. Pick up her backpack and hand it to her.
- **Make it a game.** Most kids love competition. So challenge your child to put on her shoes or finish that last spoonful of yogurt before you finish counting to 20.
- **Give your child advance notice** of what comes next. It's the best way to help your child develop a sense of time. Say, "In five minutes, it will be time for breakfast." Or, "After dinner, we'll read a story."

## How to coach your elementary schooler to academic success



An effective coach is someone who guides, encourages and inspires. Thinking of yourself in this role is a helpful

way to make sure your elementary schooler is ready to learn.

To be a positive academic coach for your child:

- **Act as a resource.** At homework time, be available to offer encouragement, answer questions and suggest places where your child can go to find the information he needs, such as a website or reference book.
- **Talk about the things** your child is learning. Grades matter, but they are only a product of learning. It is more important to emphasize the learning process. This includes

hard work, persistence and making steady progress.

- **Be willing to say, "I don't know."** There will be times when you are not familiar with the material your child is learning. If he comes to you with a question, it's OK to say, "I never learned that. Let's take another look at the directions."
- **Keep in mind** that your child has strengths and weaknesses. He may never need help in language arts, but he may struggle in math. Support and encourage your child in every class, but do not expect him to perform the same in every subject.

**Source:** K.T. Alvy, Ph.D., *The Positive Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy and Successful Children, Birth–Adolescence*, Teachers College Press.

**Q:** My child does well on tests and quizzes, but he's really lazy about doing his homework. How can I get him to take these everyday assignments more seriously?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** It's critical that your child learn to take his assignments seriously. Although quizzes and tests have a larger impact on his overall grades, it's homework that reinforces his knowledge on a daily basis.

To help your child take his homework more seriously:

- **Tell him how you feel.** If you haven't spelled it out yet, do so now. "I've noticed that you blow off your homework quite a bit. That's not OK, so let's figure out how to change the situation."
- **Enforce a daily work time.** Brainstorm with your child to find a time that works best for him—and make sure he sticks to it. "Your homework session starts at five o'clock. No arguments." If he doesn't have any homework, he can use that time to review his notes, get started on a long-term project or read.
- **Tie homework to privileges.** "After you have finished your homework, you may go outside and play basketball." To show your child you're serious, be sure to check his work before taking his word that he's finished with everything.
- **Follow up at school.** If your home strategies don't work, get his teachers involved. Let your child know that you'll be checking with them each week to see whether he's turning in completed assignments. Assign appropriate consequences and enforce them.



# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Treat reading as an enjoyable summer activity



To keep your child reading over the summer, treat it like any other fun summer activity. Let it be some-

thing he can do whenever he feels like it. Show him that reading can be enjoyable. And never make summer reading feel like homework.

If you help your child make the connection between books and the simple pleasures of childhood, his desire to read may last a lifetime.

To take a summer approach to reading:

- **Suggest that your child** reread a favorite book. Then find another book by the same author. Or find one on the same topic.
- **Connect books** with summer activities—sports books for a summer league player, for instance, or camping books for a camper.
- **Let your child** stay up past bedtime when a book is just too good to put down.
- **Start your child** on a series of mystery or thriller books. These page-turners hook kids into a reading habit.
- **Encourage a change** of venue. Read books at the beach or pool, in a tent or at the park.
- **Watch movies**, videos and plays based on children's books. Then read the books together and compare the versions.
- **Share your favorite books** and magazines with your child.
- **Encourage your child** to retell stories or parts of stories from the books he reads.

## Limit recreational screen time with these unplugged activities

**T**he lazy days of summer can lead to lazy hours staring at digital devices. But experts say it's important to limit recreational screen time.

Encourage your child to:

- **Be the entertainment.** Instead of watching a show, your child can create one. Have her choose an exciting story line and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.
- **Play classic games.** Fill a bucket with traditional summer toys, such as sidewalk chalk, balls, bubbles and water sprayers. When the weather is right, have your child take it outside for hours of fun.
- **Be a mad scientist.** Go online to find simple science experiments you can do together.
- **Plan a treasure hunt.** Hide lots of clues, with each one leading to the next. This can be done outside or inside. The last clue should lead



to a treasure, such as a yummy snack or a fun activity.

- **Create a masterpiece.** Gather supplies such as glue, construction paper, fabric, yarn, washable markers and paint. Ask your child to create something.

## Inspire journal writing this summer with creative ideas



The summer is a great time for your child to begin writing in a journal. All she needs is an empty notebook and a few ideas to get started.

Suggest that she keep:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a subject she loves, such as skateboarding. Encourage her to research and write about it. What are some cool skateboard tricks? When were the first skateboards created? How many skateboard parks are in the United States?
- **A travel log.** Each time she goes somewhere special—whether it's far away or close to home—she can keep a record by taking pictures, drawing or writing notes. What did she see? Who did she meet? What did she think about what she saw?
- **An observation log.** Suggest that your child observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or she can pick something to describe in great detail, such as a bug or an animal.