

Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



A reboot can help your child get back on the right track

When you run into a problem on your laptop or smartphone, do you ever power it off and restart it? Rebooting a device can help it correct processing issues and start over.

If your child's school year is not going as well as you'd hoped, it may be time to help him reboot, too! Here are a few ways to help your child get back on track:

- **Make change a family affair.** If you've decided that your child needs to spend more time doing homework, make his study time quiet time for the whole family. You can work on paperwork or read while your child works.
- **Replace bad habits.** Breaking a habit is hard. It's much easier to put a different one in its place.

If your child is in the habit of watching TV as soon as he walks in the door, suggest that he read for 30 minutes instead. He'll still have a chance to relax—but he will also strengthen his reading skills.

- **Get organized.** This month, you can find lots of great-looking calendars available on sale. Look for one your child will enjoy using. Then help him get into the habit of writing down things like the day his book report is due and the days he has soccer practice. That can help avoid a last-minute panic.
- **Celebrate successes.** Help your child see the link between his new habits and his results. "You studied for that test and got nine out of 10 correct. That's great!"

Boost success by promoting a growth mindset



School is filled with challenges—and your child's success depends on how she responds to those

challenges. Encourage her to develop what researchers call a *growth mindset*.

A growth mindset determines how kids think about problems. Suppose, for example, your child is having trouble finding the answer to a math problem. Some kids would throw up their hands and say, "I'm not good at math"—and quit trying. But other kids would take another view. "This is a challenge and I love a challenge."

Children in the second group have a growth mindset. They believe that even if they can't do something now, they will be able to learn it in the future. They're more likely to stick with the problem—and solve it.

You can encourage this mindset by praising your child's effort. "That project was challenging, but you stuck with it and finished it!"

Source: C. Romero, "What We Know About Growth Mindset from Scientific Research," Mindset Scholars Network, niswc.com/elem_mindset.

Share test-taking tips to boost your child's performance



Regardless of how well your child knows the material before a test, he will benefit from knowing some basic test-taking strategies. Encourage your child to:

- **Read carefully.** This applies to directions, questions and answers.
- **Ask questions.** If your child doesn't understand the directions or a question, he should ask the teacher for clarification before he starts.
- **Manage his time.** Tell him to look over the questions and answer the easy ones first. If he gets stuck on an especially hard question, he should move on and come back to that question when he's finished everything else.

- **Use the process** of elimination when answering multiple choice questions. He should cross off answers he knows can't be right. Then he can focus on choosing between the answers that are left.
- **Be neat.** His handwriting should be clear and his mistakes should be erased completely.
- **Use extra time** to review his answers and check for careless mistakes.

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

—Colin Powell

Support your child's reading progress with seven strategies



You're proud of your child for learning to read. But remember that reading skills must be developed and maintained. The older your child gets, the more she'll depend on them for learning.

To support your child's education and foster her reading progress:

1. **Go beyond books.** Let her select reading materials she likes. She doesn't have to limit herself to books. Encourage her to read comics, magazines, age-appropriate news articles, video game instructions and recipes.
2. **Make connections.** When you plan a trip, find books related to the location. Or, have your child read about historical events that happened near your home.
3. **Build excitement.** Make reading irresistible. Let your child stay up 15 minutes later to read in bed. Or, let her build a fort in her room and read by flashlight.
4. **Role-play.** Turn favorite books into family plays or movies. Add props and costumes.
5. **Suggest she join** (or start) a book club. Get friends together for book-related discussions, activities and snacks.
6. **Set a timer.** If your child resists reading, a timer might help. Say, "Read to me for three minutes. When the timer beeps, you can stop." Add a minute every few days.
7. **Read aloud.** Try reading more advanced books. When parents read to them, kids enjoy more challenging words and stories.

Are you teaching your child to use time wisely?



Time management is an important skill for school success. The school year is half over, so now is a good time to take a few minutes

to think about whether you're helping your child use her time wisely.

Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below:

- ___ **1. Have you reviewed** your child's homework and study schedule and made adjustments as necessary?
- ___ **2. Do you use** your family calendar to record dates for tests, projects and extracurricular activities?
- ___ **3. Do you try** to keep a balance between your child's activities and the rest of your lives? If your child is up past his bedtime every night finishing homework, it's time to cut back.
- ___ **4. Do you help** your child break down big assignments into smaller chunks?
- ___ **5. Do you make** sure that your child has some time each day for fun or relaxation?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child learn to use time wisely. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Research disproves these five common myths about learning



Research shows that while people often believe they understand what “effective learning” looks like, they’re frequently mistaken.

Here are five common myths about learning, along with the research-based facts:

- **Myth #1:** Everyone has a specific learning style. Fact: Kids learn in all kinds of ways. In one situation, they may do better *hearing* new material. But in another? *Seeing* examples could be key.
- **Myth #2:** You’re either born smart or you’re not. Fact: Children’s IQs and abilities can increase over time—especially when they’re given access to books and learning opportunities.
- **Myth #3:** Long study sessions are the best way to prepare for a quiz or test.

Fact: Kids retain facts much better if the information is spread out over time. Studying a little each day is much more effective than trying to digest everything in one sitting.

- **Myth #4:** Reading material over and over is the best way to learn it. Fact: It’s more effective for students to restate key ideas in their own words.
- **Myth #5:** Right-brained students learn differently than left-brained ones. Fact: There’s no evidence that being left-brained (favoring logic and math) or right-brained (favoring art and emotions) has an impact on learning. Actually, there’s no proof that one side of the brain even dominates at all.

Source: A. Kamenetz, “You Probably Believe Some Learning Myths: Take Our Quiz To Find Out,” NPR, npr.com/elementary_myths.

Keep your discipline technique simple to reduce frustration



There’s no way around it: Your child is going to misbehave at some point—and it’s going to be frustrating! You can’t

change that, but you *can* control your expectations and responses. That’s why the American Academy of Pediatrics offers parents this advice:

- **Be realistic** about your child’s abilities. If you demand too much from her, you’ll both be disappointed. Make a few simple rules your child can understand. Match them to her age and level of maturity. Then expect a reasonable amount of cooperation.
- **Mean what you say.** Think carefully before you state a rule, a promise or consequence. Is it fair? Will you

really follow through? Once you’ve made a good decision, stick to it! Kids make better choices when they can count on what parents say.

- **Consider your child’s feelings.** Kids appreciate parents’ understanding. It helps them behave. Say, “I know you’re disappointed that you can’t have a sleepover. Maybe another night.”
- **Be forgiving.** No child—or parent—is perfect. If you do something you regret, such as yell at your child, discuss it when you’re calm. Apologize and say what you’ll do differently next time. Then keep your word! Teach your child that everyone can learn from mistakes.

Source: “Disciplining Your Child,” American Academy of Pediatrics, npr.com/elementary_healthydiscipline.

Q: Lately, my child has been telling me he hates school. He doesn’t say it every day, but he has said it more than once. I’m not sure how to respond—he has to go to school, after all. How can I get to the root of the problem so I can help?

Questions & Answers

A: Not all children who say they hate school actually hate it. Sometimes, they’re just looking for attention—or for a chance to put off doing homework.

However, if your son has said he hates school more than once, there could be something going on. Here’s what to do:

1. **Talk to your son.** Wait for a time when he’s relatively calm and when you have time to talk. Then ask him to tell you how he’s feeling and why. “You’ve said you hate school a couple times. What’s making you feel this way?”
2. **Identify the problem.** Listen closely to what your child says. Is he struggling in a class? Are students mean to him on the bus? Is he feeling overwhelmed because he’s participating in too many activities?
3. **Help your child find solutions.** For example, if he’s struggling in a class, encourage him to spend more time on the subject and make sure he is turning in his homework.
4. **Be positive.** Help your child see that nearly every situation has positives and negatives. By focusing on the positive, he can change his entire outlook.
5. **Talk to your child’s teacher.** Let her know how your child is feeling and ask for her support. When parents and teachers work together, students are more likely to succeed!

It Matters: Motivation

Help your child make learning resolutions



The start of a new year is a traditional time for making resolutions. Why not help your child make some learning

resolutions to help her finish the school year strong?

Here's how:

1. **Start a conversation.** Tell your child something you've resolved to change. "This year, I'm going to get more exercise and cut back on watching TV." It'll show her that a resolution is really just a promise you make to yourself.
2. **Get her thinking.** Are there things she's struggled with in class? Nudge her toward making improvements. "You've had trouble getting your homework done on time. What could you do to fix that?" Creating a study routine, starting projects earlier, or organizing her school supplies are three examples of things she could resolve to do.
3. **Define the goal.** Resolutions can be vague. She can make hers concrete by turning it into a specific goal. Use her "creating a study routine" resolution and make it real. "I resolve to spend at least 15 minutes studying every day." When a goal is measurable, it is easier to achieve.
4. **Be supportive.** Resolutions have a way of fading away. So support your child if she starts to slip. "I know it's hard to stick to a study routine, but you can do it!" Remind her that falling short once in a while doesn't mean she can't get back on track.

Build your child's enthusiasm about school and learning

A child's experiences at school affect her attitude about learning, and so do her experiences at home. To build your child's enthusiasm for education:

- **Be a role model.** If you have a positive attitude about school, your child is more likely to feel the same way. In addition to saying good things about school, attend school meetings, parent-teacher conferences and other school events. Supervise your child's homework time and show interest in her school day.
- **Compliment success.** When your child works hard, be sure to speak up! This helps her make a connection between effort and taking pride in her success.



- **Link lessons to real life.** Show your child how what she learns at school can help her in real life. Math skills may help her spend money wisely. A vocabulary word may show up in a favorite book.

Paying your child for grades is not an effective motivator



There are just some things that money can't buy—including smarts, motivation and school success. Here's why experts discourage using money as a reward for good grades:

- **It places the emphasis** on the wrong thing. If you promise your child money for a good grade, he'll be working for the money rather than working to learn. He may find that he wants the money so badly that he's willing to cheat to get it.
- **It doesn't help** your child learn the satisfaction of doing a job well. Children need to learn the joy that comes from just doing something

to the best of their ability. Great pride comes with handing in one's best work. That is the reward your child ought to be striving for.

- **It focuses on the outcome** rather than the effort. Children need to learn the importance of trying their best and sticking with challenging subjects. Putting all his attention on a reward at the end of the process will make it harder for your child to learn that lesson.

So what should you do? Let your child know that school is important. Celebrate his successes with time spent together. And keep your money in your pocket!