

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Cotulla Independent School District



May 2019

Show your elementary schooler that math is a natural part of life

Your child will use the math skills she is learning now throughout her life. To give her an idea of just how useful they are, involve your child in daily math activities.

To sharpen her skills, together you can:

- **Prepare to ride.** Before you go somewhere with your child, do the math. Show her how to measure the air pressure in the bike or car tires. Look at a map and calculate how far you will go. If you are driving, how much gas will you need?
- **Follow recipes.** Let your child help with measuring and weighing. Discuss sizes, shapes and fractions. Ask questions like, "When we add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, what do we get?"
- **Shop for bargains.** Use coupons to inspire math problems. "If we use this coupon, will this item cost less than the other brands?" Have your child use a calculator to keep a running tally of your purchases.
- **Save for a purchase.** Help your child choose an item to save for, such as a book she wants. How much will she need to save each week? How long will it take her to reach her goal? Make a chart to help her keep track.
- **Play games.** Math is part of a lot of fun games. Try dominoes, Uno, Life and Connect 4.



Academic achievement depends on attendance

Your child woke up late and can't get going. She has a big test today and forgot to study her notes. When things like this happen, you may wonder if missing a day of school here and there is really a big deal. The answer is *yes*. Attending school regularly is important—right up to the very last day.

Encourage summer reading

To keep your child reading when school is out, never make it feel like homework. Instead, try a summer approach:

- **Suggest that your child** reread a favorite book. Then help him find another book by the same author.
- **Let him stay up** past bedtime when a book is just too good to put down.
- **Ask the librarian** to recommend a "thriller" series at your child's level. These can hook kids on the reading habit.



Help your child be on time

Kids often seem to think of time as endless and schedules as unimportant. But learning to manage time is part of being a responsible student. To encourage punctuality:



- **Be a good role model.** Instead of racing around in a mad dash, show your child the value of getting ready early.
- **Create routines.** For example, establish a "launch pad" where each evening your child can put everything that needs to go to school the next day.
- **Take action.** Nagging your child probably won't help her hurry up. Instead, look for concrete actions that will make a difference. Hand your child her hairbrush. Help her put on her backpack.



Maintain your child's motivation all the way to year's end

With summer vacation around the corner, some students begin to act as if the school year is already over. It isn't! There is much for your child to learn in the coming weeks. To help him stay focused:

- **Show him how far** he's come. Talk about all the things your child has learned this year. Review old homework papers, quizzes and tests. Finding them will also help him be prepared to study for end-of-year tests.
- **Connect learning** to your child's interests. If he has another book report due, suggest that he choose a book on a topic he loves.
- **Share strategies** for managing long-term-projects. Help your child break down a big project into smaller steps. Then encourage him to apply this rule of thumb: Make the deadline for each step two days earlier than necessary. That way, if something unexpected happens, your child will have a cushion of time to work around it.



How can I ease my child's move to middle school?

Q: My child will be going to a different middle school next year than most of his friends. He's really worried about it. How can I make this transition easier?

A: It's normal for your son to feel anxious about this transition. The move to middle school is a big adjustment. Instead of being in the highest grade in school, he'll be in the lowest. He'll have to change teachers and classrooms several times a day. And the emotional swings that can come with puberty don't help.

To ease your child's worries:

- **Arrange for a tour.** See if he can tour his new school when classes are in session. Seeing the building and the students will give your child a better idea of what to expect on his first day.
- **Remind him that he won't be the only new kid** in the school. Everyone in his grade will be starting fresh.
- **Learn about school activities.** Some may start over the summer. If your child participates, he'll start school already knowing some kids.
- **Help him feel competent.** Suggest that he set up systems to help him organize his schoolwork, for example. He might plan to color-code binders and homework folders. You can also assign him a few household responsibilities and include him in some family decision-making.



Do you help your child prepare for tests?

At this time of year, students often face tests in a variety of subjects. The way your child prepares will affect her results. Are you helping your child do her best on year-end tests? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you write** test dates on your family calendar and avoid scheduling big activities the day before?
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to study a little each day for several days before a test?
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** that your child gets a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast before a test?
- ___ **4. Do you suggest** that your child dress in layers to be comfortable on test days?

- ___ **5. Do you express** your confidence in your child's abilities?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child get ready for test success. For each no, try that idea.

"You hit home runs not by chance, but by preparation."

—Roger Maris

May is cause for celebration

Share a laugh, strengthen bonds and honor service with your child this month on these special days:

- **May 5**—World Laughter Day. Check out some joke books from the library for family members to read. Have everyone tell their favorite jokes at dinner.
- **May 15**—International Day of Families. Discuss what family means to you. How is your family special?
- **May 18**—Armed Forces Day. With your child, do something special to thank someone who is serving in the military.

Offer screen alternatives

Don't let the increased free time of summer vacation turn into increased screen time. Set limits, then encourage your child to:

- **Get some exercise.** Take a hike or fly a kite together.
- **Be the entertainment.** Instead of watching a show, ask her to create one.
- **Keep a journal.** She can describe the people she meets and the places she sees.

Plan a summer of learning

School may take a break for summer, but education shouldn't! To keep your child learning all summer:

- **Help him pursue** interests. If your child loves playing the guitar, for example, read books about the instrument, go to a free concert or encourage him to write to a famous guitarist.
- **Make time to talk.** Having back-and-forth conversations with you supports your child's brain development.
- **Find a new activity** you can do with your child. Choose something that excites him, then show your own desire to learn and improve—and never give up.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

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1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1013