

Helping Children Learn[®]

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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Vernon Independent School District
Partnering For Excellence

Nurturing your child's self-respect encourages respect for others

Respectful behavior makes classrooms peaceful and supportive places to learn. A child's ability to show respect depends on a key ingredient: a sense of self-respect. If children don't value themselves, they will find it hard to value and respect other people. They will also have trouble following the rules.

But how do you develop your child's sense of self-respect? Consider these factors:

- **Competence.** It feels great to be good at things. Give your child lots of chances to learn and practice skills—everything from reading to playing sports to doing chores.
- **Accomplishments.** Notice and compliment her progress. "You've read three books this week. Impressive!"
- **Confidence.** Encourage your child to stay positive through challenges. Display a "you can do it" attitude. Help her see mistakes not as failures, but as opportunities to learn.
- **Independence.** Let your child make age-appropriate choices. 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. Ask about her day. Listen to her answers.
- **Imitation.** If you have self-respect, your child is more likely to have it, too. Be kind to yourself and believe in your worth.



Get creative with spelling

Your child will have a great time building her spelling confidence when you give her a variety of fun things to write with.



Encourage her to practice writing spelling words using paint or crayons. Let her shape them with play dough or pipe cleaners. You might even spray shaving cream on a cookie sheet and let her write in it with a finger.

Build reading excitement

Kids with a desire to read develop strong reading skills. But some kids just aren't interested. Here are three ways to show your child that reading is rewarding:

1. **Sign your child up** for a pen-pal program. He'll look forward to reading the messages and letters he receives.
2. **Take a field trip.** Ask your child to go online and read about sights in your area. Visit one and let him be your "tour guide" on a fun outing.
3. **Reward good behavior** with "reading coupons" good for 30 minutes of reading with you or for an extra trip to the library or bookstore to select a book.



Start habits for success now and later

Help your child develop effective homework habits in elementary school and you will set him up for success in middle and high school. To do it:

- **Set and enforce a study time.** Some kids need to blow off steam right after school, while others prefer to finish homework right away. Choose a time that works best for your child—and stick with it.
- **Teach time management.** Long-term assignments are perfect opportunities to teach the value of planning. If your child has to write a report, for example, have him split the project into parts and set a deadline for each one.
- **Create a study space.** Make sure your child has a comfortable place to work that is free of distractions, such as the TV. Stay nearby to supervise.
- **Compliment success.** Say things like, "You worked hard and it shows!" or "Doesn't it feel great to be finished? Now we can do something fun!"

This math looks delicious!

Grocery store ads are great tools for helping your child practice math facts. Have her cut out ads with pictures of foods she likes. Then:



- **Ask her to create and solve** word problems with the ads. "Mia bought one pound of bananas for 60 cents. How much change would she get from one dollar? What would two pounds cost?"
- **Practice estimating.** Give your child a few of the ads and have her estimate the total price of all the items in them.

Source: "Tuesday Teacher Tips: Grocery Store Ads," DreamBox Learning, nisswc.com/bananas.



How can I help my child remember facts he reads?

Q: My son reads the text before test time, but he can't always seem to recall the facts. How can I help him improve his memory?

A: Your child is not alone. Fortunately, there are many memorization tricks that can help kids learn and recall facts. Here are a few to try with your child:

- **Grouping.** Have your child study similar things together. Instead of memorizing the capitals of every state in the country at one time, for example, he can divide them into regions and memorize each region.
- **Acronyms.** To memorize a list, he can make a word, name or sentence out of the first letters of the items. For example, *Roy G. Biv* for the colors of the rainbow (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet).
- **Images.** Your child can draw or imagine a picture of what he's studying. Then during the test, he can recall his picture.
- **Singing.** Your child can replace words in a familiar song with facts he needs to remember.
- **Recitation.** Have your child repeat the facts he is trying to learn out loud and focus on the meaning of what he's saying.
- **Personalization.** Encourage your child to connect information to his life. The date of a historical event might also be a relative's birthday.



Are you making attendance a priority?

Making sure that your child attends school every day—and on time—is a fundamental part of helping her succeed in school. Are you promoting good attendance habits? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you tell** your child that you expect her to go to school every day?
2. **Do you refuse** to accept weak excuses? Not feeling like getting out of bed isn't a good reason to stay home.
3. **Do you help** your child set an alarm clock so she has enough time to get ready?
4. **Do you schedule** medical and dental appointments for your child outside of school hours whenever possible?

5. **Do you keep** your child home if she is truly sick? This helps others avoid absences.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are establishing good attendance habits. For each no, try that idea.

"There is no denying it. When our children go to school, we go too."
—Dorothy Rich

Work on working together

Class discussions, group projects and group activities all require students to work with one another. In order to succeed, your child needs to have strong social skills. To reinforce these skills at home:

- **Talk about what it takes** to be a friend—being honest, kind and a good listener, etc. Role-play with your child.
- **Practice cooperation.** Do projects together, such as planning a family meal.
- **Teach your child** to be a good sport, whether he wins or loses.

Power down screen time

Small changes can have a big impact when it comes to keeping your child's recreational screen time under control. You can:

- **Set limits.** Make sure she has time for homework, reading, family and play.
- **Turn the TV off** if no one is watching.
- **Keep electronic devices** out of your child's bedroom.

Source: "Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds," Kaiser Foundation, nismc.com/reduce.

Give thanks—in writing

This is a great month to have your child think about his reasons for being thankful. Help him put his thoughts into writing to make a family keepsake. Here's how:



- **Brainstorm together.** Ask your child to name something he's grateful for. He might say, "I'm thankful for our dog."
- **Have him write** his statement on a piece of paper. Next, he should write all the reasons why he's thankful for the dog.
- **Have him draw** a picture at the bottom of the page.

Repeat this activity with everyone in the family. Staple all the pages into a book the whole family can read.

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