

16 Ways to Help Your Children Do Well in School

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Some children appear to be "natural students." They learn quickly, and their "photographic memories" enable them to recall almost everything they hear and see. They are amazing! Teachers love them! I don't know about you, but I was not one of those students. Most "ordinary" children need external prodding to motivate their learning process.

According to the US Office of Education Research and Improvement:

Successfull students behave in certain ways. They have the "right" attitude. They're motivated, they pay attention, they're relaxed, they ignore distractions that might interfere with learning. And, when they need help with schoolwork, they know how to get it

None of those things are inborn, but they can be learned. And you, as a parent, can help a child learn them.

Here are several ways you can help your child do well in school:

1. Take a personal interest.

The only words many children hear from their parents about school are these: How was school today? or Go do your homework! Parents would do better to be more specific and ask, Do you need any help in understanding your homework assignment? Do you have questions about your lessons at school? Show a personal interest in the learning tasks facing your children.

2. .Don't banish your child to his room to study.

Working in the same room with you may be helpful. It depends on the nature of the assigned work. Be available for interaction with your child.

3. Teach organizational skills.

It is not a news flash to you that children generally are not organized. Doing things in an orderly fashion is a brand-new idea to most children. Begin by training your child to be a list maker-listing things she needs to do at home and at school. The list would include chores, papers to write, books to read, book reports, projects, and homework assignments. We know that list makers are usually more relaxed than non-list makers, because non-list makers must keep everything in their head.

4. Start on the toughest subjects first.

Human nature is such that a child is less likely to complete his work if the most difficult tasks are last.

5. Use memory tricks, or mnemonic devices.

For instance, the first letters of the five Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior) spell HOMES. It is a matter of associating the unknown with the known. Teaching your child to use memory tricks can be helpful, and even fun. There are numerous valuable memory tricks.

6. Look for the main ideas.

As students listen to a teacher or read textbooks or other material, they should ask, What is the main point?

7. Read in small segments.

Encourage your children to read short passages and then stop and ask themselves questions about what they just read, such as: *In what ways were the Pilgrims different from people in the United States today? Are astronauts more likely to find God in outer space than here on earth?* Formulating questions and reflecting on reading content facilitate cognitive learning.

8. Set goals and deadlines.

Help your child identify reachable goals and set deadlines for reaching them. Offer to play a game if a chapter is read and the study questions answered within a given time. Small rewards can be very stimulating for children.

9. Monitor your child's learning skills.

Be sure your child has mastered one skill before moving on to the next. This is particularly essential in the lower grades, and it's particularly important in reading and math. These fundamental skills are keys to success in all other areas of learning.

10. Make your home a learning laboratory.

Kaercher writes:

*"Make your kitchen a learning laboratory. Teach fractions to a young child with measuring spoons and cups, or cut a potato into halves, fourths, and so on. "*¹

11. Take notes.

Children cannot remember everything they hear or read. Notes taken with headings and subheadings are essential for later recall. Begin early to establish this pattern.

12. Help your children prepare for tests.

Ask them to write possible test questions as they read and study. Then read the questions to them and ask them to verify the right answers in the text.

13. Help your children check their homework.

Most children, and adults for that matter, don't enjoy going back over a written assignment to check for grammatical or spelling errors, nor is it fun to check math problems for misplaced decimal points, but it must be done. A last minute check can make a major difference.

14. Praise your children for their successes.

Don't belabor failures. Look for improvement in their work, and commend them whenever possible. Let them hear you share your approval of their good work as you talk with family and friends. You can build a valuable approval base that your children will want to live up to.

15. Don't pressure and push your children beyond their capabilities.

Don't use threats to get them to do academic work they simply cannot do. Don't measure your children's future worth by current academic prowess. Brilliance in school is not the sole criterion for a meaningful life. Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, and Winston Churchill were all low achievers in school. Yet, you will agree, they did quite well in their later years.

16. Pray.

Urge your child to hold prayer conversations with God about schoolwork, something like this: *Dear heavenly Father, with your help I know I can do this, but right now I am stuck, This is what I understand about the problem, This is what I don't understand. Make clear to me what I must do to find the answer. Amen.*

Children need the right amount of parental push. As Kaercher says, "It's indisputable: Children's success depends less on IQ than it does on what parents do at home to help them achieve."²

¹ Dan Kaercher, "40 Ways to Help Your Youngster Achieve in School," *Better Homes and Gardens*, March 1985, p. 53.

² Ibid.

