



## Build character by teaching your child to be a good citizen

**G**ood citizens think of other people's needs. They have empathy and compassion. They also have the desire and courage to make the world a better place.

Children aren't born with these traits. They need role models and experiences to develop them.

Teachers teach citizenship when they ask students to be polite and follow rules, respect the rights and property of others and help classmates do chores valuable to the classroom community.

Some schools have school-wide citizenship projects, such as recycling, fund-raising, food drives and school beautification.

Here's how you can be a part of developing your child's civic spirit:

- **Model caring and sharing.** Offer a ride to a parent who needs

transportation to attend a school activity. Visit an ill friend. Take cookies to the local fire or police station. Volunteer in a soup kitchen.

- **Show your child** she can make a difference. Give her household chores. Have her donate used toys and clothes to a homeless shelter. Let her be a "surrogate grand-child" for someone in a retirement home.
- **Play board games** with your child. Emphasize perseverance and treating opponents fairly.
- **Read books** that celebrate community-minded qualities. In Leo Lionni's *Swimmy*, for example, brave Swimmy rights a wrong.
- **Talk about** how others might feel. Say, "Maddy lost her dog. How do you think she feels?"

## Daily school attendance will ensure success



He woke up late and there's no way he's getting to the bus. Would it really matter if he went to school late—or not at all?

In a word, yes. A study from the *Journal of Educational Research* found that attendance makes a big difference. Kids who are in school every day do better than those who aren't.

But what can you do to make those mornings easier? How can you get your child up and out the door, on time, every day? Here are some tips:

- **Start the night before.** Is homework in the backpack? Are permission slips signed? Does he have lunch money?
- **Put the backpack** by the door your child will go out.
- **Lay out clothes**—down to the socks. This one step will avoid more morning fights than anything else you do.
- **Create a to-do list** of jobs that have to be done in the morning.

Source: Douglas J. Lamdin, "Evidence of Student Attendance as an Independent Variable in Education Production Functions," *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 89 No. 3 (1-800-365-9753, [www.heldref.org/jer.php](http://www.heldref.org/jer.php)).

# Protect your child from bullies with a healthy dose of self-esteem



In the upper elementary grades, girl-on-girl bullying can become a serious problem. One of the best ways to make sure your daughter stays away from that behavior is by building her sense of self-esteem.

If she's having trouble making friends at school, look for a way she can meet new people. Even if she isn't popular in one place, she can still make friends somewhere else.

Try to get your daughter involved in a club or sport. Belonging to a group will help your child grow in

confidence and give her the courage to try new things. If she volunteers to help others, she will see herself as a caring person. If she can shoot a basket, she will see herself as strong and capable.

Check with your school. Ask about clubs or groups your daughter can join. Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs are also great ways for your daughter to meet new people and develop new skills.

**Source:** Cheryl Dellasega and Charisse Nixon, *Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying*, ISBN: 0-743-24987-9 (Fireside Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

# Motivate your child to succeed with three proven strategies



Some children have the confidence to tackle any challenge. Others seem defeated before they ever start. What makes the difference?

Researcher Jacquelynne Eccles has looked at the qualities that help children believe they can succeed. To instill confidence in your child, try the three things she suggests:

- 1. Give your child** challenging, but doable tasks. An eight-year-old probably can't cook an entire dinner for the family. But a child that age could set the table or make the salad. As you are doing work around the house, ask yourself if your child could do some part of the task. Your child will feel great—and you'll get the job done. You'll also help your child develop the "I can give it a try" attitude that leads to success in school.
- 2. Teach your child** how to do new things. People used to throw kids into the water hoping they'd figure

out how to swim. Usually, they just learned that they hated water. So *show* your child how to do a job.

Then help him do it the first time.

- 3. Let him do it himself.** That's the same way a teacher helps kids learn new things in the classroom.

**Source:** Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Families, Schools and Developing Achievement-Related Motivations and Engagement," in Joan E. Grusec and Paul Hastings, *Handbook of Socialization*, ISBN: 1-593-85332-7 (Guilford Press, 1-800-365-7006, www.guilford.com).

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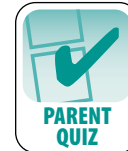
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# How can you help your child tackle that big project?



It's a fact of school life: The older the child, the bigger the project. But will you survive your child's next big project?

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

\_\_\_ **1. I will help my child** break down the project into lots of little jobs. She can write each job on her homework calendar. As she finishes each job, she can cross it off.

\_\_\_ **2. I will have my child** make a list of all the supplies she needs to avoid last-minute dashes to the store.

\_\_\_ **3. I will help her** find a topic that is something she can understand. (Most fifth graders can't understand molecular biology!)

\_\_\_ **4. I will take her** to the library and encourage her to talk with the librarian.

\_\_\_ **5. I will proofread** her paper, but I won't write it for her. If she is cutting and pasting from the Internet, I'll make sure she rewrites it in her own words.

## How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are taking positive steps towards getting your child through the big project. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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## Have an idea to share?

The editors of **Parents make the difference!** pay \$25 for each original idea published (in English, please), and you will receive credit in the article.

Send ideas to **Parents make the difference!**, Editorial Staff, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474 (or [www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd](http://www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd)). Materials sent cannot be returned.

# Strengthen your child's writing with the 'name that action' game



"He *walked* into the room." "He *strutted* into the room." "He *crept* into the room."

All three of those sentences mean more or less the same thing. Somebody came into a room. But the action words—*walked*, *strutted* and *crept*—create a very different picture. Helping your child think about the action word that best paints a picture is one way to help him become a better writer.

The "Name the Action" game is a fun way to do this. It can work for a group of kids, or for those days when the family is cooped up indoors.

Here's how to get started:

1. **Collect small slips of paper** and on each one, write a verb that describes a precise action. Here are some to get you started: *skip*, *hop*, *stomp*, *tiptoe*, *limp*, *crawl*. You might take a day or two to come

up with your list. This is a good activity when you're riding in the car.

2. **The first player** draws a slip of paper. Then he acts it out as well as he can.
3. **The other players** try to guess the word. Whoever guesses the word gets to go next.

As kids get older, the words can get harder. How would you show that someone *strolled* into the room? How would they *burst* into the room?

When your child is writing, remind him of this game. Instead of writing, "he said," help him think of other words that would describe that action. Did he *whisper*? *Snarl*? *Shout*? Choosing the right descriptive verb will help your child's writing really come alive.

Source: Harvey S. Wiener, *Any Child Can Write*, ISBN: 0-195-15316-2 (Oxford University Press, 1-800-445-9714, www.oup.com).

# Remember to pick your battles when disciplining your child



Pick your battles. If parents could pass down one piece of discipline advice, that's what it would probably be. Don't

get into power struggles with your kids over every single problem. Choose what's important.

And there are battles that are worth having. Here are four good reasons to set limits:

1. **To keep your child safe.** Don't let your child play with matches. Insist that she wear a seat belt in cars. Make sure she uses a bike helmet. Don't let her run into the street.
2. **To help develop character.** Telling the truth is important. Calling

people mean names only hurts their feelings. You are right to set limits in those areas. You should also teach your child not to cheat, and to respect adults (including teachers).

3. **To develop responsibility.** Children need rules and responsibilities in order to grow into productive adults.
4. **To get along with others.** Children need to learn to wait their turn, to say "please" and "thank you," and to share.

Source: Bonnie Maslin, *Picking Your Battles*, ISBN: 0-3122-6378-3 (St. Martin's Griffin, 1-800-221-7945, www.stmartins.com).

**Q:** Homework is a hassle—for me! First my fourth grader and I argue about when to start. Then he says he did his reading at school. Next he "doesn't understand" the math. What can I do to reduce both my son's frustration and mine?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Homework hassles can affect the entire family. You can eliminate them using these four simple steps:

1. **Establish a homework time.** Don't fight about when he'll do his homework. He will benefit from a routine. Some kids work best right after school. Others do better if they work right before or after dinner. Give him some choice in the matter—but once he picks a time, that's it. Homework is as routine as brushing his teeth.
2. **Insist that homework time happens every day.** This will solve the problem of "I did that at school." What if he says he really, truly has nothing to do? He can read ahead. He can do extra math problems for practice. But he will spend that time doing something that will help him do better in school.
3. **Ask your child questions** when he says he doesn't understand something. For example, instead of explaining the math, ask, "How did you solve that last math problem? Could you do that here, too?"
4. **Don't ever do his work for him.** One way the teacher sees how much your child is actually learning is by checking his homework. If you do the work, she may not know if she needs to reteach something.

—Kristen Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Building Study Skills

## Help your child master the art of studying for tests



Tests can cause anxiety for children and parents alike. Helping your child figure out exactly *what* to study

can boost his confidence and comprehension.

Make exam day smoother with these studying tips:

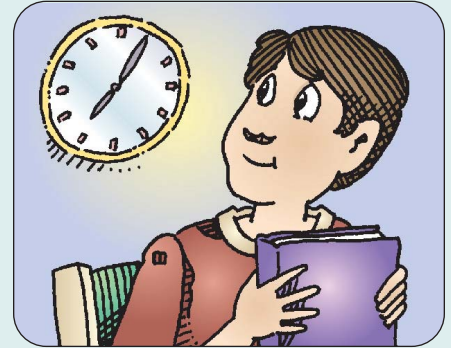
- **Ask your child** what he thinks will be on the test. What main points did the teacher repeat in class or write on the board? What did she say to remember? Did she provide a study guide?
- **Look for possible test content.** Help your child pick out key points in his notes and homework assignments. Have him review words and sentences in boldface type in his textbook. Examine pictures, tables and sidebars. Hunt for key phrases like “three reasons for ...” and “the purpose of ...”. Also, remind him to check out the questions at the end of chapters.
- **Turn main points** into quiz questions. Have your child change the text heading “Causes of the Civil War” to “What are the causes of the Civil War?” He should review previous tests for the types of questions the teacher typically asks.
- **Select a variety** of problems from recent homework assignments and quizzes if your child is studying for a math test.
- **Read spelling words** aloud as your child writes them down.
- **Have your child** use vocabulary words in sentences.

## Share basic study skills to help your child succeed in school

**W**hat’s the difference between a successful student and one who’s not so successful? According to experts, it may be the study skills they have learned.

Here are four skills that can transform your child into a better student:

1. **Set goals.** Before starting any study period, your child should set goals. Ask him, “What is the most important thing you have to do today?”
2. **Organize time.** To help your child organize his time, have him figure out everything he has to do. Then estimate how long each will take. He can use his study goals to decide which assignment to complete first.
3. **Ask questions.** Successful students make up questions as they read. Instead of just taking in information, they think about the questions the text is

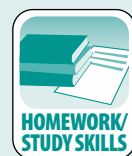


answering. By asking questions and writing them down, your child will have a better understanding of what he is reading.

4. **Measure progress.** If your child has decided to spend an hour reading a chapter in his science book, he should check every 15 minutes or so to make sure he’s moving fast enough.

Source: Peter Kline and Laurence Martel, *School Success: The Inside Story*, ISBN: 0915556251 (Great River Books, 801-532-4833, www.greatriverbooks.com).

## Keep homework, school papers organized with a master binder



Having a system for organizing school papers is key to getting homework finished and turned in on time.

A three-ring binder with side pockets can help. In it, your child can place:

- **A zipper pouch.** Insert pencils, pens, eraser, highlighter—all items your child needs at school.
- **Colored dividers** for each subject. Add loose paper.
- **One pocket divider** for items “To Bring Home,” such as homework, permission slips, notes to parents, etc.
- **One pocket divider** for items “To Bring to School,” such as completed homework, notes from parents to teachers, etc.