

Elementary School Parents[®] Katy Independent School District

make the difference!



Breaking the study 'rules' can actually pay off for your child

Forget everything you thought you knew about studying. Research is showing that there are more effective ways to study. These findings will help your child make the most of where, what and when to study.

Most of us thought that studying had to take place in a single spot. But researchers are learning that may not be the best way to promote learning. In one test, students were given a list of words to memorize. Half learned the words while sitting in a single spot for two days. The other half studied in a different room each day.

Who did better? The second group. So have your child study spelling words in the kitchen on Monday and the bedroom on Tuesday. Even a little change of scenery may make a difference.

What should your child study? Until recently, people thought

learning one thing at a time was most effective. Memorize state capitals today. Learn historical dates tomorrow. But it actually helps to mix things up. A little variety seems to leave a deeper impression on the brain. Athletes and musicians have known this for years. A musician will spend time playing scales, studying theory and practicing a musical piece. An athlete will combine a strength workout with some speed or skill drills.

When is the best time to study? Students remember more if their studying is spaced out. So have your child work on those math facts tonight. Then review them on the weekend. Add another study session next week. She'll get a better result.

Source: B. Carey, "Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits," *New York Times*, September 6, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/health/views/07mind.html?_r=2.

Try a fun way to practice subtraction



There's only one way to learn math facts—by practicing. Here's a new way to practice subtraction.

You'll need a set of flash cards with subtraction problems on them. Stack them face down in the middle of your playing table.

You'll also need to count out 50 tokens for you and your child. The tokens can be game chips, pennies or paper circles.

The first player draws a card with a subtraction problem. Suppose it is $11 - 7$. If the player knows the correct answer (4) he can put four of his tokens in a pile in the center of the game table. Then it is the other player's turn.

If a player gives an incorrect answer, he has to take five tokens from the pile. Continue playing until one player has no more tokens, making him the winner.

Playing this game regularly will help your child know subtraction facts automatically.

Source: "50-cent Subtraction," Fun Math Games For Kids, www.learn-with-math-games.com/fun-math-games-for-kids.html.

What to say when you hear the dreaded words ‘That’s not fair!’



“That’s not fair!” For most kids, it’s the all-purpose complaint about their parents. And, of course, parents *want* to

be fair. But what a parent sees as “fair” may not appear the same way to a child. Here are some ways to respond when your child tells you you’re not being fair:

- **Point out that “fair” doesn’t always mean “the same.”** If only one child needs a new pair of pants, you won’t buy a pair for the second child just so you can be fair! In the same way, if Sam has a big project due tomorrow, he’s going to need to spend more time doing homework than Aiden.
- **Listen to feelings.** If your child wants a new toy that you just

can’t afford, you should certainly hear him out. You can tell him you understand that he wants the toy—but that it simply isn’t in your budget.

- **Ask what would be fair.** Sometimes, your child may have a pretty good idea. “Your sister does get to go to a sleepover. What would be something we could do that would be fun just for us?”

Source: Ray Guarendi, *Discipline that Lasts a Lifetime*, ISBN: 1-569-55368-8, St. Anthony Messenger Press.

“Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.”

—Emilie Buchwald

Four things young athletes want their parents to know



It’s natural to want to cheer for a young athlete. But when parents get too involved, kids say they would rather their parents

just stay away.

Here are four things your young athlete wants you to know:

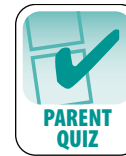
1. **She loves having you** on the sidelines—except when you go too far. Your child wants you to be supportive of her *entire* team, not just her. She doesn’t want you to yell at the referee. And she doesn’t want you to yell at the parents of the kids on the other team!
2. **She wants you to recognize** that the coach is in charge. Most youth coaches are just volunteers. Most of them are trying to give children a chance to play a game. Even if

you think you could do a better job (and then why aren’t you the coach?), your child would like you to respect the coach’s authority.

3. **She wants you to be happy** when her team wins. But she doesn’t want winning to become so important that she doesn’t enjoy just playing the game. It’s fine to talk about the game when it’s over. But don’t go on and on about it for days.
4. **She wants you to be realistic.** If no one in your family is taller than 5’6”, you are probably not raising a basketball star. Help your child learn to enjoy sports and find the one that’s right for her.

Source: Jim and Janet Sundberg, *How to Win at Sports Parenting*, ISBN: 1-578-56354-2, Waterbrook Press, a division of Random House.

Do you find ways to encourage your child to read?



Sometimes, kids who *can* read just don’t. Luckily, there are some things parents can do to encourage those

non-readers to pick up a book.

Are you doing all you can to encourage your child to enjoy reading? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- ___ 1. **Do you read aloud** to your child, even if he can read by himself?
- ___ 2. **Do you encourage your child** to try books in a series? If he likes one, he might enjoy the others.
- ___ 3. **Do you encourage your child** to turn off the TV? Do you keep the TV out of your child’s bedroom?
- ___ 4. **Do you let your child read** comic books? Do you sometimes read comic books to your child?
- ___ 5. **Do you look for books** or magazines about the things that interest your child?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child become a kid who will love reading. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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It's never too late for parents to get involved at school



When parents and schools work together, the results can be incredible, including better grades, attitudes and behavior.

In today's busy world, however, the idea of parent involvement can be overwhelming. "What do I have to do?" you may wonder. "I'm already short on time!" Don't worry. Involvement doesn't need to be complicated or time consuming.

Even though the end of the school year is right around the corner, it isn't too late to get involved. Starting right now, you can:

- **Attend events.** Put key gatherings on your calendar as soon as possible. Your child might sing in a school musical, for instance, or play on a school team. While at school, make an effort to connect with staff and other families.
- **Read materials.** Pay attention to school information sent home

and posted online. Request it in another language if needed. Keep track of important dates, such as end-of-year celebrations and tests.

- **Join the parent-teacher group.** If you can't make it to meetings, read the minutes from each meeting.
- **Volunteer.** Classrooms have a variety of needs. Ask your child's teacher if there is anything you can do to help out. Perhaps you could prepare items for a craft, organize a class party, read to students or help in another way that fits your schedule.
- **Ask questions.** "How can I help my child succeed?" "Should I correct homework mistakes with him?" "What are the most important school tasks for us to accomplish each day at home?"

Source: "Parent Participation: How to Get Involved in Your Child's School Activities," Colorín Colorado, www.colorincolorado.org/article/26541.

Make screen time become active time for everyone in your family



Kids need to be active for 60 minutes a day to be healthy. But many kids do not get that much activity. What do they do instead? They watch TV. They play video games. They send messages to their friends.

One way to increase your child's activity is by turning screen time into active time. Here are some ways you can keep screen time from turning into "couch potato" time:

- **Use TV commercial breaks** as fitness breaks. Challenge your child—who can do the most

sit-ups during this commercial break? The most jumping jacks?

- **Keep small weights** in the room where you watch TV. Have your child do a few curls while he is watching a favorite show.
- **Swap out screen time** and active time. Ask your kids to "earn" 30 minutes of screen time by getting 30 minutes of activity.
- **Be a good example.** Stay active yourself and your kids are more likely to be active.

Source: "Reduce Screen Time and Get Active," Let's Move, www.letsmove.gov/parents-step-4.php.

Q: My daughter wants a cell phone. Most of her friends have them. And to be honest, there are times when I'd really like to be able to reach her. How can I tell if she is old enough to have a phone? What advice do you have for parents before they get a phone for their child?

Questions & Answers

A: You are the only one who can decide whether your daughter is old enough to handle a phone. First, ask your daughter why she wants a cell phone. If she is generally responsible about her belongings, she is likely to be able to keep track of a phone. And if she usually follows your rules on other issues, she'll probably be agreeable to limits you set on her cell phone.

And that's exactly what you need to do. Before you buy the phone, set up a clear code of what will—and will not—be acceptable. Below are just a few of the things your child should be aware of:

- **She will need to stay within** the limit of talking and texting that you allow. (It is a good idea to get an unlimited texting plan so there are no surprises when the phone bill comes. However, you can still set limits on your child's usage.)
 - **You will have the right** to look at any text messages she sends and receives.
 - **If she uses the phone** inappropriately, you will take it away.
 - **She must follow** the school's rules about cell phone use.
- If your daughter is agreeable to all of your limits, write up a contract outlining the details. Make sure both of you sign it.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Reading

Does your child understand that reading material?



Research shows reading comprehension is an essential skill—one kids depend on throughout their school years and

beyond. To help with this:

- **Ask questions about reading materials.** “Why did the character do that?” “What do you think will happen next?” “How would you summarize the story?”
- **Relate to reading.** How does your child relate to a story? What would she do as the main character? Has she experienced anything similar in real life?
- **Connect stories to each other.** “This story was about trains. Have you read any other books about trains?”
- **Match reading to your child’s abilities.** If a book is too difficult or frustrating for your child, try something else. Talk with her teacher about the best options.
- **Pick irresistible materials.** If your child has trouble finding appealing books or magazines, talk with her teacher. Consider poetry and nonfiction.
- **Write about reading.** Suggest that your child write a book review. Would she suggest the book to others? Why or why not?
- **Limit TV.** Too much screen time can take away from important activities, including reading. Set—and consistently enforce—reasonable limits.
- **Encourage reading.** Aim for at least 20 minutes of reading each day. Enjoy reading together.

Source: G. Carrier, “Comprehension,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/12376.

You can practice fluent reading with your elementary schooler

When teachers read aloud, they do it fluently—so smoothly it’s almost as if they’re talking instead of reading! Fluency is a skill kids need to develop too. Children who read quickly and easily like reading more, and they get more out of what they read.

Once your child has learned to read, put special emphasis on fluency. Try to:

- **Read, read, read.** Research shows that just reading develops fluency! (Reading aloud to your child counts too.) Squeeze reading into your day creatively. For example, write your child notes and turn on captioning during TV time.
- **Reread.** Your child probably has favorite books he loves to hear over and over. That’s fine! Researchers say new and old materials help with fluency. All reading makes a difference.



- **Read together.** Instead of reading silently, read the same material—aloud—at the same time. Let your child pick what to read. Suggest that he point to words with his fingers as you both read them.

Source: “Fluency: Helping Your Child Read and Understand,” *Promising Practices*, Families and Advocates Partnership for Education, www.fape.org/pubs/fape-37.pdf.

Research shows that reading for pleasure improves skills



As long as your child reads, does it really matter if he *likes* it?

Research says it does!

Studies have shown that reading enjoyment is more important for a child’s educational success than his family’s socio-economic status. Studies also link reading for pleasure to:

- **Comprehension.**
- **Grammar skills.**
- **Vocabulary development.**
- **Good attitudes about reading.**

- **Writing ability.**
- **Confidence about reading.**
- **Increased general knowledge.**
- **Reading for fun later in life.**

To encourage pleasure reading, help your child find materials he’ll like. You can even try things like magazines, comics, jokes, recipes and more. Make reading a fun part of your family’s routine.

Source: C. Clark and K. Rumbold, “Reading for pleasure: A research overview,” National Literacy Trust and Scholastic, http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/i/Reading_for_pleasure.pdf.