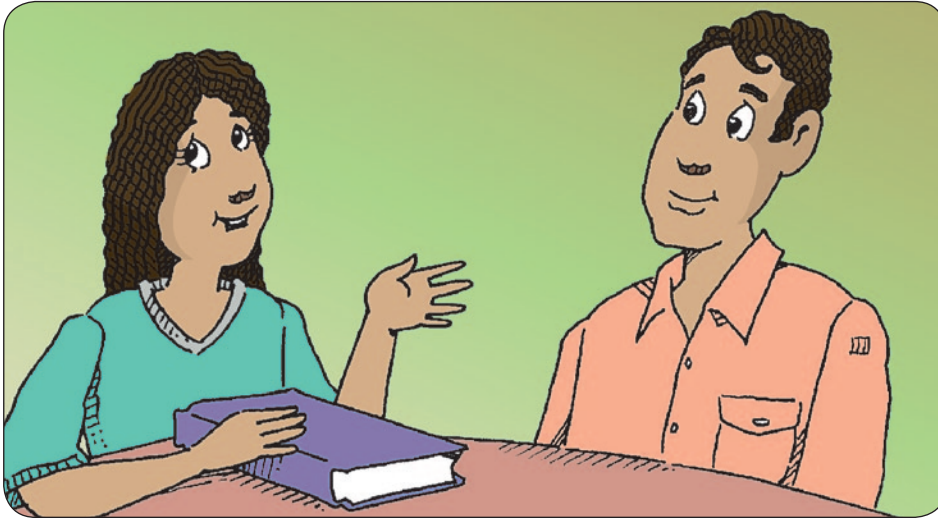


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Elementary School Parents[®]

Katy Independent School District

make the difference!



Improve your child's reading comprehension with retelling

You've just finished reading a story with your child. One of the best ways to boost your child's understanding of the story is by asking her to retell it.

Retelling a story requires a child to think about the details. It also helps a child think about what's really important.

Give your child three rules for retelling a story:

1. **Tell what's important.**
2. **Tell it in a way that makes sense.**
3. **Don't tell too much.**

Your child should be able to tell what happens at the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. She should also be able to name the main characters.

You can help by asking your child open-ended questions, such as,

"What happened next?" Your child may not remember all the details in the story. That gives you a chance to say, "Let's go back and look at that part of the story again." This will show your child that she sometimes has to read things more than once to gain a real understanding.

Studies show that this simple activity will help your child become a more thoughtful reader. She will start to pay attention to words whose meanings she doesn't know. She will focus on story structure and pay more attention to important details. All of these things will improve your child's reading comprehension and make her a better reader.

Source: Barbara M. Taylor & James E. Ysseldyke, editors, *Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers: K-6*, ISBN: 978-0-8077-4821-3, Teachers College Press.

Encourage your child to have a growth mindset



Every child will face challenges. And parents can help shape how their kids respond

to those challenges that life presents. One of the best ways is by helping children develop what researchers call a *growth mindset*.

A growth mindset affects how kids think about problems. Suppose your child is having trouble finding the answer to a math problem.

Some kids will throw up their hands. "I'm not good at math," they'll say as they quit trying. But other kids will take another view. "This is a challenge and I love a challenge."

Kids in the second group have a growth mindset. They believe that even if they can't do something now, they will be able to learn it in the future. They're more likely to stick with the problem—and solve it.

So praise your child's effort. "That project was challenging, but you stuck with it!"

Source: M. Krakovsky, "The Effort Effect," Stanford Magazine, www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2007/marapr/features/dweck.html.

Encourage thankfulness in your child with the compliment game



Children tend to think of themselves as the center of the universe. Here's a game that can get them to focus on the contributions other people make to their lives.

Each evening at dinner, play the compliment game. One by one, family members either offer a compliment to someone else or thank someone else.

"I'd like to thank Mom. This dinner is my very favorite." Or, "I'd like to compliment Ryan. I couldn't find my gym shoes this morning. He helped me look for them until I found them."

If you do this each day, your children will begin to pay attention.

They'll notice the nice things others do for them. They will thank other family members for helping them.

Your compliments will have an effect on your children. You will also see them repeat the behavior so you can compliment them again!

Source: Rafe Esquith, *Lighting their Fires: Raising Extraordinary Children in a Mixed-up, Muddled-up, Shook-up World*, ISBN: 9780-6700-2108-6, Viking.

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

—Stacia Tauscher

Enjoy after-school time together with a few meaningful activities



Afternoons aren't just about homework, activities and chores. They're also about spending meaningful time together. This can

be as easy as sharing a meal or as complicated as redecorating a room.

No matter what, having fun leads to good conversation and stronger relationships. Simple ideas include:

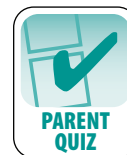
- **Make up funny names.** What would you name a spotless garbage collector? (Mr. Meticulous?) Come up with silly, good-natured questions and answers.
- **Name new places.** Take turns calling out a country, state, city or province. The next player must name a place that starts with the location's last letter. (New York

might be followed by Kansas and then Sweden, etc.)

- **Memorize items.** Start by saying, "On my birthday, I got a _____." Fill in the blank with something amusing. Each player adds an item and repeats the other gifts.
- **Stump the parents.** Hang up a map and let your child quiz you on geography. "What countries border Germany?" "What is the capital of South Carolina?"
- **Roll marbles.** Place a small container, such as an empty can with safe edges, on the floor. Take turns trying to roll a marble into it. (It's tough!) Start with a handful of marbles so you don't chase one marble the whole time.

Source: Cynthia MacGregor, *365 After-School Activities You Can Do With Your Child*, ISBN: 1-58062-212-7, Adams Media.

Are you teaching your child how to prioritize?



Prioritizing is a tall order for many children. What is the main thing they need to do? How can they focus on that?

Are you helping your child learn how to prioritize? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to write down assignments every day—from tomorrow's math homework to next month's science project?
- ___ **2. Have you explained** that your child's top priority should be anything that is due tomorrow?
- ___ **3. Do you help your child decide** what to do first if several things are due at the same time?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage your child** to complete a small part of a long-term project each day?
- ___ **5. Do you enforce rules** about what has to be done before he can watch TV or play video games?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child prioritize. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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Share poetry with your child to build language & writing skills



Reading poetry together is a great way to make your child more aware of language. Poetry will help your child develop better writing skills, as well.

Your child will learn new and different words (it's not just *black*, it's *ebony*.) The best way for him to be able to select the exactly right word is by making sure he knows a lot of words!

Besides, sharing poetry is fun! Reciting a favorite poem can be a special memory you share with your child.

Here are some tips on sharing poetry during your read-aloud times:

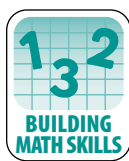
- **Read widely.** Children love Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein. But there are many more poets to enjoy. Look for a collection of children's poetry in your library.

Or ask your child's teacher to recommend a good poetry book.

- **Don't read too fast.** Let your child listen to each word.
- **Have fun!** Your enthusiasm will carry over to your child.
- **Talk about the words** poets use. In "Paul Revere's Ride," Longfellow speaks of "the hurrying hoof-beats of that steed." If your child doesn't know what a *steed* is, this is a good chance to find out!
- **Start a poetry notebook.** Let your child copy down favorite poems (or parts of longer poems). Underline words or phrases he especially likes. Then he can go back and reread these poems on his own.

Source: Tommy Thomason & Carol York, *Write on Target: Preparing Young Writers to Succeed on State Writing Achievement Tests*, ISBN: 0-926-84298-6, Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Simple activities can help your child master math vocabulary



When children learn math, they also need to learn a whole new vocabulary. If they have to stop to think about words like *product* or *quotient*, they won't be focused on doing the math.

Just as your child needs to learn basic math facts from memory, he also needs to understand many math terms. So make a game of learning math words.

Here are three activities you can try with your child:

1. **Link math symbols** to math words. Have your child create flash cards with a symbol on one side and the word it represents on the other. Use the flash cards to help your child review.

2. **Play math concentration.** Write a math term on one card. Write its definition on another card. Then deal out five or six pairs of cards face down. Your child tries to remember both the definition of the word and where he saw it.
3. **Create funny cartoons** that show the word doing the thing it represents. For example, the math term *product* is the answer you get resulting from multiplying two numbers together. The goal is to link the word *product* with *multiply*. So your child could write the word as "pro (x) duct = product."

Source: Judy Willis, *How Your Child Learns Best*, ISBN: 9781-4022-1346-5, Sourcebooks.

Q: There are some mean girls in my daughter's class—and I don't want her to turn into one of them! One of the "Queen Bee" girls is picking on another girl. I found out that although my daughter is not the bully, she stands by when these things are happening. What can I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Bullies love an audience. So most bullying takes place when there are other students close by—but when adults are absent.

Many of the students who are bystanders are not comfortable with what they see. Many of them would like to do something—but they don't know what to do.

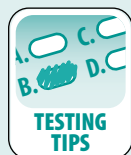
Your job is to give your daughter the power to do what she knows is right. Here's how:

- **Have a casual talk about school.** "I hear some students are being mean to Emily. Have you ever seen anything like that go on?"
- **Hear her out.** Then talk about your family's values. Tell your daughter, "I know you'd like to stop this from going on, and you can."
- **Encourage her to tell an adult.** She might say, "You should check out the bathroom on the second floor after lunch. Please don't tell anyone I told you."
- **Encourage her to talk** to her other friends about what's going on. They may be surprised to discover they all are uncomfortable with the bullying. Together, they might distract the bully: "Hey, we've got some work to do—let's get back to class." Or they can just say, "Cut it out. It's not cool to pick on people."

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Motivation

Teach your child that failure leads to future success



Your child brings home a test with a disappointing grade and wants to throw it away. What should you say? “Everyone makes mistakes, but not everyone learns from them.”

Help her review the test, learn from mistakes and raise her odds of future success! Common student mistakes include:

- **Careless errors.** Sometimes students record wrong answers accidentally. (“Oops! I meant to circle A, not B!”) Other times they misread something, skip a question or simply have poor handwriting.
- **Lack of preparation.** Paying attention in class is necessary. But kids also need to do homework, read textbooks, memorize facts and ask questions when they’re confused.
- **Preoccupation.** Perhaps your child was sick on test day, didn’t get enough rest, skipped breakfast or was worried about something.

Help your child find solutions for any problems that occurred. Could she read tests more carefully next time? Study with flash cards? Go to bed on time?

Also focus on what she did well! She probably answered many questions correctly. As you read the test together, help her understand what she did wrong and encourage her to fix her mistakes.

Source: Ron Fry, “Ace” Any Test: Fifth Edition, ISBN: 1-4018-8912-3, Thomson Delmar Learning.

Children need parents’ support to accomplish their big goals

It’s tough for kids to stay focused on long-term goals. Doing so requires persistence, a trait that develops over many years. The good news is you’ve been helping with this all along by encouraging your child to improve skills and finish tasks. To keep up the good work:

- **Tackle small challenges.** Put together a jigsaw puzzle to help your child visualize and reach a goal. If he gets stuck, give him hints. Praise his success!
- **Make accomplishment exciting.** Choose goals your child wants to achieve, such as building a model plane. When a task isn’t fun, such as cleaning a room, plan a reward for finishing it.
- **Use reminders.** If your child sets a long-term goal, such as purchasing a video game,



mark his progress with stars on a chart. He could also hang a picture of the game in his room. Visual cues may work better than verbal reminders, which can be misinterpreted as nagging.

Source: Peg Dawson, Ed.D. & Richard Guare, Ph.D., *Smart but Scattered*, ISBN: 978-1-59385-445-4, Guilford Press.

Build your child’s enthusiasm about school and learning



A child’s experiences at school affect his attitude about learning, and so do his experiences at home. To build your child’s enthusiasm about education:

- **Be a role model.** If you’re positive about school, your child is more likely to feel the same way. In addition to saying good things about school, attend parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organization meetings and other school events. Supervise homework time and show interest in your child’s school day.

- **Compliment success.** When your child works hard, be sure to speak up! This helps him make a connection between effort and feeling good.
- **Link lessons to real life.** Show that what your child learns at school can help him in real life. Math skills may help him spend money wisely or understand sports statistics. A vocabulary word may show up in a favorite movie or book.

Source: D. Minger, “Ways to Promote Positive Attitudes Towards School,” LIVESTRONG.COM, www.livestrong.com/article/83701-promote-positive-attitudes-towards-school/.