

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Peter Cooper School  
Michael Sutcliffe, Principal

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## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Provide structure during summer

Doing household chores makes children feel capable and important. And having a regular routine provides structure and a sense of security.

Remember, elementary-age children love to plan and carry out their plans. So start by brainstorming with your child about what needs to be done and when. Also:

- **Give your child a choice of chores.** She should be able to wash dishes, take out trash, vacuum, fold laundry, help with yard work, etc.
- **Rotate chores each week.** Try putting chores on slips of paper. Then have family members draw their chores from a bowl.
- **Make a game of it.** Set a timer and see if your child can “beat the clock.”
- **Use a chore chart.** Place stars on it when chores are completed.
- **Schedule a “work time”** when the whole family is doing chores.
- **Show your child** step by step how to do new chores.
- **Curb criticism.** Don’t immediately point out what your child did wrong.
- **Celebrate.** Take pictures of your child next to a job well done.

Providing a structure for doing chores during the summer will make it easier for your child to get back into the school routine in the fall.

Source: Lynn Lott and Riki Intner, *Chores Without Wars*, ISBN: 0-7615-1252-7 (Prima Publishing, [www.primapublishing.com](http://www.primapublishing.com)).



## MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Keep focus on school until the last day

Summer is just around the corner, but the school year hasn’t ended yet. It’s important to keep your child focused on school until the very last day. To help your child overcome spring fever:

- **Make sure** your child is in school on time every day.
- **Expect** your child to complete all assignments. He may want to play outside, but make sure he leaves time and energy for homework.
- **Maintain** regular bedtime routines. The days are longer, but your child still needs plenty of sleep to stay focused in school.
- **Monitor** end-of-the-year projects. Help your child break a big assignment down into smaller steps. Move the deadline for finishing any big project back by two days. That way, he’ll have a “cushion” if something comes up!

Source: Donna Goldberg, *The Organized Student*, ISBN: 978-0-7432-7020-5 (Fireside Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)).

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Community provides learning opportunities

Promoting summer learning doesn’t mean you have to turn your home into a summer study hall. Look for free offerings in your community that will interest your child. Consider:

- **Reading programs** at the library.
- **Hikes**, nature talks and field trips.
- **Plays** and other events at the high school.
- **Day camps** for art, music, sports, etc.

## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Stock up for summer fun

The lazy days of summer can sometimes be boring. Include your child as you create a “summer fun center.” Together decorate boxes that hold items for:

- **Crafts**—markers, crayons, paint, construction paper, safety scissors, glue, old magazines, etc.
- **Games**—cards, books of word puzzles and math games, etc.
- **Outdoor fun**—a magnifying glass, sidewalk chalk, a jump rope and balls.
- **Plays**—old clothes, masks and props.



## DISCIPLINE

### Ask helpful questions about problem behavior

If your child’s behavior is frustrating you, here are three issues to consider:

1. **What** is the specific problem?
2. **When** does it happen most?
3. **Why** do you think it happens?

Answering these questions may lead to a solution to your child’s behavior.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents encourage kids to keep learning this summer?

**Q: My son is really looking forward to the homework-free days of summer vacation, but I don't want him to lose the skills he has learned this year. What can I do to avoid the "summer slump"?**

**A:** You're a wise parent to realize that summer vacation shouldn't mean your child takes a break from learning. And you're right. The old saying, "no more teachers, no more books ..." doesn't apply anymore.

Over the summer, students can lose up to 60 percent of what they learned during the school year. And research shows that this "brain drain" in elementary school hurts their performance in later school years.

This summer, reinforce your child's skills in:

- **Math.** Let your child measure and weigh as you cook. Help him organize a lemonade stand where he can calculate change.
- **Science.** Have a family scavenger hunt for bugs, leaves, rocks and flowers. Study stars in the summer sky.
- **Reading.** Visit the library weekly. Read a chapter book aloud together.
- **Writing.** Have him keep a summer journal. He can write about family events, books he has read and movies he has seen. Or he can write his own mystery and adventure stories. Encourage him to add illustrations and photos to his writing.
- **Critical thinking.** Together read articles in the newspaper. Then ask him if they provide facts or opinions.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you promoting a love of reading?

Unfortunately, many children would rather spend their time doing anything but picking up a book. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child learn to love reading:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you make** sure reading is a regular part of your family's day?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you avoid** worrying if your child reads comic books instead of "good" books—as long as she's reading *something*?
- \_\_\_ **3. Does your child see** you reading nearly every day?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you try** not to discourage your child from trying a book that's too hard for her? You might read the book aloud.
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you take** regular trips to the library with your child?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're raising a child who loves to read. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't."  
—Mark Twain

### Repetition trains memory

Saying facts aloud is a great way to remember them. It forces your child to focus, and saying things aloud uses more senses. Research says that the more senses you use in learning, the easier things are to recall. Encourage your child to use this technique when studying for end-of-the-year tests.

## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Look on the 'flip side'

Do you notice your child's strengths? Consider the "flip side" of traits often viewed as negative. If your child is:

- **Picky.** Think of her as *selective*. She sets standards.
- **Stubborn.** Think of her as *determined*. She sticks with it. She is persistent. She doesn't follow the crowd.
- **Bossy.** Think of your child as a *leader*.

With your guidance, your child can turn negative traits into positive assets.

Source: Gary McKay, Joyce McKay, Daniel Eckstein and Steven Maybell, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World*, ISBN: 0-761-52811-3 (Prima Publishing, www.randomhouse.com).

## SCREEN TIME

### Monitor your child's TV time over summer break

Don't let your child turn into a summer couch potato.

Follow these three steps:

- 1. Set** a limit on how much time your child can spend watching TV.
- 2. Help** him pick out his shows for the week.
- 3. Post** his TV viewing list and expect him to stick to it.

Together come up with a list of activities for TV-free time.



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