

TIPS PARENTS CAN USE TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

From the Pages of Parents make the difference!

MAKING TIME COUNT

- ☑ **Put specific times on your calendar** each week when you will spend time with your children. During that time, focus your love and attention on your child.
- ☑ **Use car time to talk with your children.** There's no phone or TV to interfere. No one can get up and leave. And kids know they really have your ear.
- ☑ **Plan to eat at least one meal together** as a family each day.
- ☑ **Try to spend some time alone with each child** every day. One mother takes a daily walk with one of her children. They have time to talk . . . and they both get some exercise.
- ☑ **Look for things to do together as a family.** Get everyone involved in choosing how to spend your time together. Sometimes try something new.
- ☑ **Try giving the gift of time** instead of just traditional presents for birthdays and other special times. The most priceless gift you can give your children is your time. Leave free time for your kids. The best conversations happen when your child is ready to talk . . . not when you are.
- ☑ **Remember that children love to spend time with you** alone. If you have several children, try to spend at least one hour a week alone with each child. In hectic families, children will treasure those moments when they have you all to themselves. In years to come, kids will forget most of the toys you bought them. But they'll never forget the gifts you gave of yourself.
- ☑ **At holiday time, give every child a task** for the celebration. Holidays are best when everyone takes part. Make talking together a special part of any holiday. Tell your children how important they are to you.
- ☑ **Have your children think of five places** they would like to visit on vacation if they had a million dollars. Tell what five places you would visit, too. Then together try to find out as much as you can about those places. Write to the departments of tourism. Visit the library to find books about your destination. Listen to popular music from the country or state you've chosen. Look for videos at your library or video store.

- ☑ **Author Steffen Kraehmer says, remember the "three R's" of memory-making.**
They include "rituals," "routines," and the "ridiculous." **Rituals** are very important to children. These regular events can be formal—such as a religious ceremony. Or they can be informal—a special "popcorn" night. Kraehmer says "they provide emotional security and reinforce family bonds." **Routines** help children develop feelings of sameness and security. Having a routine for bedtime can help children go to sleep more easily. The **Ridiculous** includes everyday activities with a twist. Children love to see a family member do some normal activity using a new prop or act. You might dress up as the "Room Fairy" to check kids' rooms. You might serve a chocolate chip lover a huge cookie instead of a birthday cake. —Source: *Time Well Spent: A Father's Advice for Establishing a Lifetime of Closeness With Your Child*. Prentice Hall Press.
- ☑ **Reduce the morning "Rush Hour" with these simple ideas:**
- ☑ **Help your children establish good habits.** Make sure they hang up their coats as they walk in the door. Give each child a place to keep boots, hats, and school bags. Schedule a regular homework time—and stick to it.
- ☑ **Remember that a successful morning begins at night.** Before your children go to bed, have them set out everything they'll need for school—lunch money, homework, and the permission slip for the field trip.
- ☑ **Establish a regular bedtime.** Kids who conk out watching the 11:00 news can't rise or shine at 6:45.
- ☑ **Set everyone's alarm clock 15 minutes earlier.** Even a few extra minutes can make a real difference.
- ☑ **The night before, set out some easy-to-fix breakfast foods.** (Kids learn better on a full stomach.) Cereal, muffins, toast, or yogurt are all good choices. A peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich will do when kids are in a hurry.
- ☑ **Before everyone leaves, take a minute to say, "I love you" to each child.** Nothing will get their day . . . or yours . . . off to a better start.

HERE ARE EIGHT WAYS

1. Join your local parent-teacher association and attend all the meetings you can.
 2. Schedule a regular time for homework. Check your child's homework every day.
 3. Take one day of vacation time and spend it with your child *at school*.
 4. Plan a long lunch break one day and join your child for lunch at school.
 5. Ask your child's teacher if there are ways you can help at home.
 6. Attend parent-teacher conferences.
 7. Ask your employer to give you some time off to volunteer in your child's school.
 8. Take part in after-school events. Special events can help you become a part of the school community.
- Put the TV set where it's hard to get.
- Remember the "80/20 rule." Simply stated, it means that 80 percent of the results of any job usually come from just 20 percent of the effort. The same rule applies to how you spend *your* time. Is the extra hour you spend on housework the best use of your time? (Or could you use that hour to do something with your kids?) You may believe you always have to "do things right." Think about "doing the *right* things right." Five years from now, your kids won't remember the night you left the dishes in the sink. But they'll treasure the memory of a walk you took to look at the night sky.
- Write down the things that are most important to you in life. Chances are, your family will be at the top of the list. Now, try to remember how you've spent your time during the past few days—hour by hour. Does the way you spend your time reflect your priorities? How much was spent with your children? How important were the things you can't remember? Make a plan for how you will use your time in the week ahead. Write it down. Include time with children in your plan. Check to see how you did at the end of the week. We do what we

think is important. Deciding what is important can be the first step in making time count.

- ☑ **Help children develop routines**—for mealtimes, for bedtime, for birthdays. The repetition helps children learn to organize their world. It gives them a foundation to help cope with the rest of their lives. It gives them security and helps them learn. What activities can your kids count on? Do you have a regular family popcorn night? Do you go to church regularly? Do you have a special weekend activity your family enjoys?
- ☑ **Try giving children TV tickets.** Each week, each child gets 20 TV tickets. Each ticket can be used for 30 minutes of TV time. Any tickets remaining at the end of the week can be cashed in for 25 cents each. Parents can still veto a certain program, of course.

HERE ARE FOUR IDEAS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE TIME

- ☑ **Set priorities.** Decide what's really important to you. Then focus your time on the things that really matter.
- ☑ **Lower your standards.** Let dust collect in the corners. Don't buy clothes that need ironing. Ask yourself, "What's the worst thing that can happen if I don't do this?" If the answer is "nothing," just don't do it.
- ☑ **Realize that there's more than one right answer.** If exercise cuts into the time you spend with your kids, find an activity you can enjoy together. If time spent preparing meals is keeping you isolated in the kitchen, insist that everyone pitch in.
- ☑ **Learn to say no.**

READING TO YOUR CHILD

- ☑ **Try relaxing your family's bedtime rules** once a week on the weekend. Let your child know that he can stay up as late as he wants—as long as he's reading in bed.
- ☑ **To find books your kids will love,** keep these things in mind:
 - **Child's age**
 - **Child's interests**
 - **Child's recent experiences**—moving, visiting grandparents, zoo trip

- **Child's reading level** (but don't over-emphasize this). If child can read the first page aloud to you, chances are she can read the entire book.
- ☑ **Help your child start their own library**—paperback books are fine. Encourage child to swap books with friends. Check used bookstores. Give books a gifts.
- ☑ **Here's how to spot easy-to-read books:**
 - Large, clear printing.
 - Pages have lots of empty space.
 - Pictures give lots of clues about what the words mean.
- ☑ **Want your children to be good readers?** Let them see you read. In 1988, more students than ever reported that their homes contained few or no reading materials. More than one-third of the nation's nine-year-olds (33.8 percent) said they had little or no access to reading materials in their homes. Students were also asked how often the people they lived with actually read newspapers, magazines, and books. Students who said they saw people reading more than once a week scored better on reading tests. In 1988, 16 percent of 13-year-olds and 14 percent of 17-year-olds said they saw someone reading never or once a year. —National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- ☑ **Try the magic of poetry when you read aloud** to your children. In *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease offers these suggestions: read it aloud, read it often, keep it simple, keep it joyous or spooky or exciting.
- ☑ **Try holding D-E-A-R times at your house.** "DEAR" stands for "Drop Everything And Read." During DEAR time, everyone in the family sits down for some uninterrupted reading time. The TV goes off. The telephone goes unanswered.
- ☑ **With young children, try reading to them during bath time.**

WATCH THESE DON'TS WHEN READING ALOUD

1. Don't read stories you don't enjoy yourself.

2. **Don't get overly comfortable while you're reading.** If you lie down, you're likely to get drowsy. If you slouch, your voice will lose its energy.
3. **Don't be surprised if your kids interrupt with a lot of questions.** And answer their questions right away. There's no hurry.
4. **Don't confuse quantity with quality.** Your child will remember ten minutes of reading together far longer than he will remember two hours of television.
5. **Don't try to compete with television.**

- Children improve their reading ability by reading,** and reading, and reading some more. Research shows that kids who spend as little as 30 minutes a day reading books, magazines, and newspapers are more likely to become good readers. They're more likely to read faster, score higher, and do better in high school and college. How does your family rate? This week try keeping a chart of your and your children's reading and TV time.
- Talk to your children.** Spoken language is the basis for reading. Talk about what you are doing around the house. Go for walks and talk about what you see. And try to answer your child's questions. (You can always say, "I don't know. Let's find out.")
- Try reading in unusual places.**
- Use the "Rule of Thumb"** to see if a book is on your child's reading level: Have your child read a page of the book aloud. Have her hold up one finger for each word she does not know. If she holds up four fingers and a thumb before the end of the page, the book is probably too hard for her to read alone. But it might be a great book to read aloud.

- ☑ **Keep a scrapbook to record your child's accomplishments.** Things I've learned in school. How I help. Artistic skills. Places I've been. Things I'm proud of. Books I've read.
- ☑ **Have child make a "book" about themselves,** with their own illustrations and wording. "A Book About Me" is a great way to help your child see herself as "somebody."

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO SET—AND ACHIEVE GOALS.

- ☑ **At the beginning** of the week, help your child identify one challenging—but attainable—goal. It might be turning in a book report on time. It might be getting 90% correct on a spelling test.
- ☑ **Have your child write** the goal on a piece of paper. Post it on the refrigerator or a bulletin board.
- ☑ **Talk about how** to accomplish the goal. Help your child break the goal down into smaller steps. For example, "You could read two chapters every day. Then you can spend a day writing your report and another day revising it."
- ☑ **As the week progresses,** ask how things are going. If problems come up, talk about possible solutions. If your child falls behind in reading, for example, a ten-minute extension of bedtime might encourage him to catch up.
- ☑ **At the end of the week,** help your child evaluate how well she did. Did she achieve her goal? Why or why not? Most important, praise your child for trying. Then set a new goal for next week.
- ☑ **Help your child discover their roots** by talking with family members during holiday and other visits.
- ☑ **Help your child develop a feeling of control** over their lives by setting regular homework hours.
- ☑ **Constantly look for ways to tell your children** what you like about them, that you love them. There is no age limit on this. "When I do something well, no one ever remembers. When I do something wrong, no one ever forgets." Those words were written by a high school dropout. Could they be written by your

child? The kids who are successful in school—and in life—believe in themselves. And they know their parents believe in them, too.

- ☑ **Let kids overhear you praising them to others.**
- ☑ **Try "King/Queen for a Day" for good report cards.**
- ☑ **Help kids learn from problems, not be devastated by them.** Many parents don't ever use the word "failure." They may talk about a "glitch," a "problem," or a "snag." But even when something they try doesn't work out as they'd planned, successful people try to learn something from the experience.
- ☑ **Children with high self-esteem have parents who: Love and accept them.**
Children with high self-esteem know their parents love them whatever they do. All children misbehave. But parents who build self-esteem criticize the behavior, not the child. They might say, "I love you, but I do not approve of your behavior right now." **See something special** in them. These parents look for something special in each of their children. They do not compare one child unfavorably with another. A child who believes he is a good athlete, or a good musician, is less afraid to learn new skills. A child who believes she is talented in math or science will be ready to learn. **Set limits.** It's confusing for a child to have too much freedom. When children know their parents care enough to set some rules, they actually feel more freedom to try their wings. **Allow for plenty** of individual flexibility within the limits they set.
- ☑ **Children need to hear these messages:** You are loved. You are secure. You are you. You matter. You are growing up.

CHOOSE WORDS THAT ENCOURAGE CHILDREN

Words That Encourage

- Knowing you, I'm sure you will do fine.

- You can do it if you try.
- I have faith in you.
- You're doing fine.
- I can see you put a lot of effort into that.
- You'll figure it out.
- That was a good try. Don't worry about the mistake.
- That's a challenge, but I'm sure you'll do fine.

Words That Discourage

- Knowing you, I think you should do more.
- You usually make mistakes, so be careful.
- I doubt that you can do it.
- You can do better.
- That's a good job, but the corners are ragged.
- Better get some help.
- If you can't do it right, don't do it at all.
- That looks too difficult for you to try.

- Help children realize how much they have learned.** "Remember when you had trouble reading this book?" If your child is struggling with long division, say, "Remember when you couldn't add 6 + 9?"
- Encourage your child in sports events.** Go to as many of the events as possible. Let the coach be the coach. Afterward find something to praise about your child's performance.

DISCIPLINE

- In good weather,** put two angry kids on opposite sides of a strong window or glass door. Provide each with a spray bottle of window cleaner and a rag. Then

let them "attack." Their angry words will turn to laughter . . . and your window will be clean!

- ☑ **Positive discipline teaches:** Right from wrong, Self-control, Cooperation in resolving conflicts, How to communicate expectations using words, High self-esteem—the feeling that "I am part of the solution," Respect for authority and for other people.
- ☑ **Try role playing to eliminate constant fighting.** For five minutes, have the fighters switch roles. Each has to present the other person's point of view as clearly and fairly as possible. Odds are, they'll start laughing and make up. Better yet, they may come up with a compromise solution both parties like.
- ☑ **For better discipline at home** be: positive, consistent, clear, reasonable, and be a good example.
- ☑ **For better discipline, speak quietly.** If you speak in a normal tone of voice, even when you're angry, you'll help your child see how to handle anger appropriately. And if you don't scream at your kids, they're less likely to scream at each other ... or at you.
- ☑ **When children tell lies:** say something like, "I'd really like to believe you, but it's hard for me to believe you're telling the truth." And then you wait, giving your child the chance to straighten things out. When kids do tell the truth, they may confess to something that requires parental discipline. Your job is to let them know they're being disciplined for the deed, and not for telling the truth. In fact, if you can reduce the punishment a little, you'll teach that honesty really is the best policy.
- ☑ **Here's how to deal with kids' chronic forgetfulness: Before your child leaves the house,** have her stop for a minute. Teach her to ask, "Do I have everything I'll need today?" **Use tricks, like the head-to-toe checklist.** Before your child goes anywhere, have her run through a checklist—"My hat's on my head, my coat's on my body, my gloves are on my hands, my boots are on my shoes, and my backpack's on my back." **Write it down.** Write down a checklist of everything your child takes to school on a typical day. Post it by the front door. **Don't make it easy to forget.** If your child has forgotten homework, don't drive her to school to retrieve it. **Teach your child to develop her own ways** to remember things. One mother bought her child a notebook that she could use to write down assignments. But the notebook never seemed to make it home at night. Finally,

the child started writing assignments on her hand because she knew she couldn't forget that!

- ☑ **Try a "black hole"** to keep toys and other belongings picked up. All you need is a closet or cabinet with a lock-the "black hole." When something is left out that should be put away, it gets put into the "black hole" for 24 hours. Once a favorite toy or something your child needs is locked up for 24 hours, there is greater incentive to keep it where it belongs. This works best when the whole family participates.
- ☑ **Tips on rules: Don't have more rules** than children can remember easily. **Don't have so many** rules that they're impossible to enforce. **Explain the reason** for all your family's rules. **Be sure you follow** the rules yourself.

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

- ☑ **How to make report cards a positive experience: Preparation.** Just before report cards are due, talk with your child. Ask, "What do you think your report card will tell us?" Then let your child tell you if he expects any problems. Even if your child does well in school, she may be nervous about a certain grade. Getting ready is helpful. **Perspective.** A report card is just one small measure of your child. There have been other report cards in the past. There will be more in the future. A child who gets all A's still has plenty to learn. And a child with poor grades still has plenty of strengths. **Positive action.** Think of the report card as a chance to take positive action. Find something to praise—attendance, attitude, improvement. Then focus on areas that can lead to improvement. Ask how you can help.
- ☑ **Be aware that your attitudes about school affect your child.** If you hated math, be careful not to prejudice your child.
- ☑ **Talk with school "In time of peace"** before major problems develop.
- ☑ **Understand that many people have learning disabilities,** that we can work around them just fine with some work, and the right kind of help. Albert Einstein, Woodrow Wilson, diver Greg Louganis, and Cher all had learning disabilities. What to do: **Talk to your child's teacher.** Tell her what you suspect. Explain why you think your child may have a learning disability. **Ask if your child can be tested.** A good test will help the school find out what learning problems your child has. It will also help the school plan how to correct them. **Give your child**

extra support at home. When school is hard, kids may act up at home. Let your child know you love him and believe in him. **Find things your child can do well.** All kids need to know they're good at something.

- ☑ **Watch for these signs of too much stress in children:** **Cry easily** and frequently. **Tire quickly**, especially after lunch; need naps after school. **Need constant reassurance** and praise. **Become withdrawn** and shy. **Develop a nervous tic**—coughing, chewing a finger, fidgeting with hair, rapidly blinking eyes. **Suck on fingers.** **Lie or stretch** the truth. **Revert to soiling** their clothes. **Make constant body** movements—rocking back and forth, kicking one leg, tapping a finger. **Dawdle.** If your child shows several of these symptoms, you should talk with a teacher or counselor.
- ☑ **Talk with your child after the test.** Helping children learn to take tests builds confidence the next time.

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

- ☑ **Children need the 4 "A"s as well as the 3 "R"s:** Attention, Appreciation, Affection, and Acceptance."
- ☑ **Some researchers believe every child is gifted**—if we will just look for the ways. Helping a child understand his particular giftedness is very motivating.
- ☑ **Encourage children to read biographies** about successful people. As children learn about the traits that made others successful, they are often motivated to adopt those same success patterns in their own lives.
- ☑ **Let your child know what you do all day.** They should know more than that you just go to a factory or to an office. They should know exactly what you do. Explain how your job is part of making a product, or selling it, or perhaps your work is a service to people. Talk about what training you had to do your job. Talk about what you like about your job and what you would like to change. Tell your child about other jobs you've had, too. Take time to talk with your child about the responsibilities of a job. Talk about doing good work, being on time and working well with other people.
- ☑ **Motivate your children in math** by challenging them to figure out how much change you should get back from a purchase. If they get the amount right, they get to keep the change.

- ☑ **Work to expect the best from your children**—and show them that you believe in them. They will work to rise to your expectations.
- ☑ **Challenge your children to figure out** how to take a family trip somewhere. Transportation, time required, cost, etc. Then take the trip.
- ☑ **Get your child off to a good start** in the school year: **Get to know your child's teacher.** As a parent, you know your child best. Share what you know with the teacher. You don't have to wait until parent conferences. **Talk with your child's teacher about problems,** too. What goes on at home affects how a child does in school. Separation, family illness, a new baby, or even a move can all affect a child's school work. You don't have to tell the teacher all your personal business, but make sure your child's teacher knows important facts. **Make sure your child gets enough sleep.** Tired children can't do their best work. So set a bedtime — and stick to it. **Learn what is expected of your child.** Will there be homework? How much? **Limit TV.** Studies show that the kids who do best in school watch the least television. Read a book or magazine. Take a walk. Visit the library, or try playing a game. **Offer to help.** Parent involvement can make it possible for a teacher to add many "extras" to the curriculum.
- ☑ **Encourage your child's inventiveness: 1. Help your child come up with a list of problems that need a solution.** They might be problems your child faces—or problems faced by a family member or a friend. Some children may want to list national or world problems. **Have your child choose one problem from the list.** You can discuss other problems, but one at a time. **Brainstorm solutions.** Have your child think of as many ideas for solving the problem as possible. List everything—no matter how silly it may seem. **Have your child choose** one solution to try. **If there's a problem, ask questions that may help solve it.** (Say, "How can you fit these two parts together?" instead of, "I think you need some glue.") **Keep the activity fun and relaxed.**
- ☑ **Ideas to build motivation: Teach your child to set goals.** Start small—learning the capitals of five states, reading for 15 minutes, tying a shoe. **Help your child learn** positive "self-talk." For young children, you might read *The Little Engine That Could* and discuss how the engine's positive attitude helped achieve the goal. For older children, watch professional athletes in action. Many of them talk to themselves throughout a game, saying things like, "I'm going to hit this next one out of the park." **Take school seriously.** Review homework every day. Ask questions about what went on in school—and listen to the answers. When your

children see that you think school is important, they'll soon think so, too. **Help your child do** something for someone else. Kids gain a real sense of accomplishment helping others. **Keep track of** your child's progress. Post schoolwork on the refrigerator. Keep a chart of how your child helps around the house. Talk about your child's good soccer game at the dinner table or riding in the car.

- ☑ **Motivate children by breaking big jobs down into small ones** and keep track of the steady progress they make.
- ☑ **Praise children constantly.**
- ☑ **Reward your child with your time** instead of just money.
- ☑ **In sports, let children choose the sport** that interests them—not you. Praise what they do well. Ignore the rest.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

- ☑ **Try a simple cardboard box** to help make your child responsible for school belongings. Have your child choose a place for the box—near the door or in his room. Every afternoon, his *first* task should be to place all belongings in the box. When homework is finished, it goes in the box, too. In the morning, the box is the last stop before heading out the door. Occasionally put small treats in the box as a reward for checking.
- ☑ **Help children understand, and take responsibility for,** the consequences of their choices. "I chose to do my homework. The result was that I got an 'A' on my math test." "I chose to get up 15 minutes late. The result was that I missed breakfast . . . and nearly missed the bus."
- ☑ **Try giving your child the responsibility** of growing a small garden—even in just a flower pot. Once you've planted a garden, you've got to weed it and water it or all your work will not bear fruit. The positive and negative results of carrying out your responsibilities are very clear.
- ☑ **One reader found a way to keep children moving** in the morning: After her daughter wakes up, Mom begins to play her favorite record album. Her daughter has until the side plays through to get herself dressed for school.
- ☑ **Try giving kids alarm clock duty:** First, make sure your family has an alarm clock that works. You'll also need one slip of paper for each member of your family. Write "wake up" on one piece of paper. Write "wake me up" on the others. Put

the papers into a bag. Have everyone draw out a slip of paper. The person who gets the slip of paper marked "wake up" will be responsible for waking the family the next day. Taking turns as "wake up" person can help children *practice* responsibility, but the final step is learning to be responsible for getting *themselves* up every day. Learning to accept personal responsibility is the goal.

- ☑ **Make a grocery list with your child**, including things the child wants. Agree on a budget. After you've bought the essentials, how much money is left? Let your child make the decisions about which treats to buy.
- ☑ **Give children some household responsibilities: Make sure responsibilities** are clearly understood. If your children are not used to helping out, have a meeting to discuss why they must get involved. Involve everyone in the family when assigning jobs. **Make yours an equal** opportunity household. Boys should learn about food preparation and laundering clothes. Girls need to learn how to handle simple household tools. **Develop "no-nag" methods** of reminding children. Some families post a chart on the refrigerator. Each day, family members check off their jobs as they complete them. **Don't redo chores** your kids have done. If a job can only be done your way, then you have to do it. Redoing a job hurts your child's self-esteem. **Finally, help your kids learn** that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. As they do more, they should also expect more freedom.
- ☑ **To encourage taking responsibility for homework time**, plan to read or do something quiet yourself at that time. You'll be a good example.

REINFORCING LEARNING

- ☑ **Encourage kids to collect things.** Whether they collect rocks, shells, leaves, or bugs is not important. But by collecting, children are learning new ways to make sense out of their world.
- ☑ **Estimating is an important math skill.** We estimate how much our groceries will cost. We estimate how much time we'll need to complete a project at work. You can help your child learn to estimate at home. Here's one idea: As you're driving,

estimate the distance to your destination. Then estimate how much time it will take to get there. Use the odometer or a map to check your work.

- ☑ **Talk about geography in terms children can understand: Go through your house** and talk about where things came from. Look for labels to see where articles were made. A calculator may have come from Taiwan. A box of cereal may have a Battle Creek, Michigan address, or White Plains, New York. **Talk about where** the wheat for your bread came from. Where was the cotton for your blue jeans grown? How did these products get from the field to your house? **Tell your children** where your ancestors came from. Find these places on a map.
- ☑ **Try having children make simple graphs at home: The color of all the cars** in the neighborhood. **The number of pieces of mail** received each day for a week. **The number of T-shirts** owned by each member of the family. **The amount of money saved** toward something special. **The kinds of trees, flowers,** or plants in the neighborhood. **The number of pets** of various kinds in the neighborhood. **The temperature outside** each day before leaving for school.
- ☑ **Try home science experiments.** Try to mix oil and water. Fill a jar with water and gently drop in an egg. It sinks. Add salt until the egg floats. Talk about why?
- ☑ **Talk with children about how math is used** at work.
- ☑ **Do you know what your children are studying** in school now? That's the first step to reinforcing learning at home.
- ☑ **Try looking over children's study materials** and making up a sample quiz as they study for upcoming tests.
- ☑ **Try helping your kids learn one new word each day.** Post it on the refrigerator. Review the words at the end of the week.
- ☑ **Show your child that writing is useful.** Have them help you write a letter ordering something, asking a question, etc. Then show them the results of your letter.
- ☑ **Give your child a notebook to make their own journal.** It's a great way to encourage writing.
- ☑ **The best way to reinforce learning is by example.** Consider going back to school yourself.

HOMEWORK

- ☑ **Try playing "Beat the Clock"** with your child during homework time. Look over the assignment and figure out about how long it should take to complete it. Allow a little extra time and set a timer for that many minutes. No prizes are needed. There is great satisfaction in getting the work done on time.
- ☑ **Teach your child to use the formula "SQ3R"** when doing any homework assignment. The letters stand for a proven five-step process that makes study time more efficient and effective: Survey, Question, Read, Restate, Revue.
- ☑ **Here are five tips to make homework time easier**—for you *and* your child: **Have a regular place** for your child to do homework. Use a desk or table in a quiet room. Be sure there's plenty of light. **Find a regular time** for homework. You may want to make a rule, "No television until homework is finished." **During homework time, turn off the TV and radio.** **Help your child plan** how she'll use her time. **Set a good example.** While your child is doing homework, spend some time reading or working yourself. Then when homework is done, you can both talk about how much you've accomplished.
- ☑ **Help your child how to use the library** and reference books to find answers to homework. Learning how to find answers when you don't know is as important as knowing the answer in the first place.
- ☑ **Help your child establish a regular time** for doing homework. The routine helps them feel in control of their lives and more positive about themselves.
- ☑ **Nitty gritty homework tips:** **Do the most difficult** homework first. Save "easy" subjects for when you're tired. **Do the most important** assignments first. If time runs short, the priorities will be finished. **Do what's required first.** Finish the optional assignments later—even if they're more fun.
- ☑ **Look over your child's homework everyday.** Start at an early age and keep it up as long as you can. Praise good work. Your interest will encourage good work.
- ☑ **Try having your child teach *you* the homework.** The teacher always learns more than the student.
- ☑ **Understand that there are different styles of learning:** **Visual learners** learn best when they can see a picture in their minds. **Auditory learners** learn mainly through their ears. They may be able to tell the answer without being able to write it down. **Kinesthetic learners** learn through their bodies. When they have

to sit still, their brains seem to "go to sleep." All children use all methods of learning. And no one style of learning is appropriate for all children. As a parent, you can help your children develop a homework style suited to the way your child learns best.

- ☑ **Try to be at home during homework time.** Your presence sends a valuable message about the value you place on homework. By checking in occasionally, you can provide help. And you can help keep your child focused on the job at hand.

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

- ☑ **Intense pressure to do well in school** is the biggest worry of young people today, according to a survey by the Girl Scouts of America. Some things you can do: **After you watch** your child in an athletic event try to focus on the fun of participating rather than on who won or lost. **When** your child brings home a test, first talk about what she got right. **When** your child helps you with a household chore, thank him for his help and talk about one thing he did especially well. **Does most of your** conversation with your child focus on the things she hasn't done? ("Clean your room!" "You forgot to feed the dog.") Try to say something positive as often as possible?
- ☑ **How to get the most from parent-teacher conferences:** **Think about what you want to learn in the conference.** Prepare some questions. **Talk with your child.** Ask what she thinks the teacher will say. Ask if she has any concerns. And talk about likes, dislikes, problems, and successes. **Ask the teacher to explain anything you don't understand.** Special programs for children are sometimes referred to by their initials. **Be prepared to talk and listen.** Tell the teacher what you see at home. Talk about your child's interests. Tactfully talk about any concerns. And be sure to let the teacher know about anything that might affect your child's learning. **Follow up.** Stay in touch with the teacher. If you think of a question you didn't ask, write a note.
- ☑ **How to handle report cards:** **Talk with your child about each grade—calmly.** Does she know why she got that grade? Can she explain it to you? What does she think needs to be done? **Talk with the teacher to get her views on needed improvements** and suggestions for ways to improve. **Find out what help your school offers.** Tutoring may be available or after-school classes on study skills.

Consider getting outside help. Perhaps an older student will work with your child. A neighbor might be glad to help. **Remember that grade cards report on only a few things.** They can't tell about a child's dreams or ambitions or what the child will become in the future. Grades are not a measure of a child's worth, just a picture of current school performance.

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