

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

December 2005

DISCIPLINE

Reduce back talk with the 'ABCs'

You remind your child to take out the trash. "I said I'll do it later," she snarls. Sooner or later, most children talk back to their parents. Here are some ways to handle it without losing your cool:

A=Acknowledge your child's feelings. You might say, "You must be tired of hearing me ask about the trash."

B=Be responsive and calm. Show how the back talk made you feel. ("Ouch! Please treat me with respect. Then we can talk.") But stay in control. Set a good example.

C=Have consequences. Remind your child, "You know the rules. No TV if I have to ask you again to take out the trash." Then stop talking.

D=Don't let back talk work. Instead of walking away, stand quietly and wait. Your child may grumble, but she'll probably take out the trash.



Sources: Cathryn Tobin, M.D., "4 Ways to Minimize Back Talk," iVillage, <http://parenting.ivillage.com/tp/tpbehavior/0,,nfb8,00.html> and "Discipline Makeover: Getting Your Child to Listen," iVillage, <http://parenting.ivillage.com/gs/gbehavior/0,,p5vq,00.html>.

ENCOURAGING READING

Help your child to remember details

Experts urge parents to read aloud to children—even when kids can read themselves. When you read to your child, he is exposed to advanced words and concepts. Then he becomes a better reader. Try this reading game:

- **Pick part of the text** with memorable details while reading. Encourage your child to remember what he hears.
- **Collect a few books** or maga-

zine articles that interest your child. Let him choose one to listen to.

- **Ask your child** to restate what he hears. Help by asking questions that start with who, what, when, where and why.
- **Have your child** quiz you on something he reads aloud, such as one of his schoolbooks. How much can you remember?

Source: Cheryl Tuttle and Penny Paquette, *Thinking Games to Play with Your Child*, ISBN: 1-56565-810-8 (McGraw-Hill Companies, 1-800-323-4900, www.mcgraw-hill.com).

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Practice social skills at home

If your child has a social weakness, such as disliking introductions, practice with him in a comfortable setting. Act out the situation, taking turns in each role:

"Hi, I'm Brad. What's your name?"

"I'm Robin. Nice to meet you. Want to play?"

This boosts confidence and comfort. Be sure to compliment your child's success.

Source: "How to Build Social Skills and Competence in Your Children," FamilyFirst.net, www.familyfirst.net/parenting/socialskills.asp.

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Consider an alternative to holiday cards

Here's a fun twist on sending cards to loved ones: Create a family newsletter.

Have each person write an "article." Your child can add illustrations. She can even draw cartoons. Make copies and send them as holiday greetings.



Source: "Family News," FamilyEducation.com, <http://familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,23-7012,00.html>.

BUILDING SELF ESTEEM

Contribute to your child's confidence

You want your child to feel good about himself, but how can you achieve this? Set realistic expectations so that he experiences success. Help him learn from mistakes. Tell him how proud he makes you!



Source: "High Self-Esteem," American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/pubed/ZZZMQ90W8FC.htm?&sub_cat=106.

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

December 2005

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How much homework help should you be giving your child?

Q: I supervise when my child does homework. But he ends up asking so many questions. I worry that I help too much. Where should I draw the line?

A: Whether he's studying state capitals or multiplication tables, your child's homework involves learning hard facts. You can help him while encouraging his independence. Here are some tips:

- **Make a rule** that your child has to try every homework question by himself, starting with the easiest ones first to boost his confidence.
- **Let your child** ask for help after he's tried all the questions. Remember the goal: He doesn't simply need right answers. He needs to know how to figure out answers.
- **Offer guidance** instead of solutions when possible. For example, if your child asks how to spell *Illinois*, suggest that he get out a map or dictionary.
- **Review work** together. When your child finishes an assignment, feel free to step in. Compliment progress and address trouble spots.
- **Ask the teacher** what kinds of help are best. Teachers have varied expectations of children and parents.



Source: Drew and Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, ISBN: 0-0743-22258-X (Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonandsays.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you promoting physical fitness?

Being physically fit helps your child handle the demands of school.

Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your family is committed to fitness:

1. **Do you try** to create places in your home where active play is allowed?
2. **Do you provide** items that encourage physical activity, such as balls and jump ropes?
3. **Do you plan** fitness activities, such as walking or playing sports?
4. **Do you limit** the time your child spends in front of the TV and computer?

5. **Do you make** an effort to spend family time outdoors?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're encouraging physical fitness. For each no answer, consider that idea to change your response to yes.

"Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children."
— Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Making bedtime earlier

Your child complains about being tired before school, and you think her bedtime is too late. These steps can help you make a change:

- **Explain** that bedtime is going to be earlier. Start gradually, such as by subtracting a few minutes each night.
- **Stick** with a calming routine, such as reading a book and saying, "I love you."
- **Reevaluate** in a few weeks. If your child is getting more sleep and is still tired, talk with your doctor.

Source: Amy Roberts, "How to Push Bedtime Earlier," Parenting.com, www.parenting.com/parenting/child/article/0,19840,1062379,00.html?topic=11366.

GROWING UP

Help your child practice skills learned in school

In later elementary school, children's learning skills expand. It's a great time for kids to practice applying what they've studied. For example, your child can:

- **Use math skills** when shopping or cooking.
- **Paraphrase** something he has copied for a report.
- **Give an opinion** on a book he's read.



Source: Jane M. Healy, *Your Child's Growing Mind*, ISBN: 0-385-46930-6 (Doubleday, 1-800-733-3000, www.doubleday.com).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

New school? Get involved!

When children transfer to a new school, it's stressful. You need to work closely with teachers.

Ask how your child is adjusting. Talk about her strengths, needs and concerns. Once you make contact, keep in touch. Monitor your child's progress.



Helping Children Learn®

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Senior Editor: Betsie Ridgauer.

Managing Editor: Patricia Hodgdon. Editor: Jennifer

McGovern. Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writer: Susan O'Brien. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2005, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1526-92