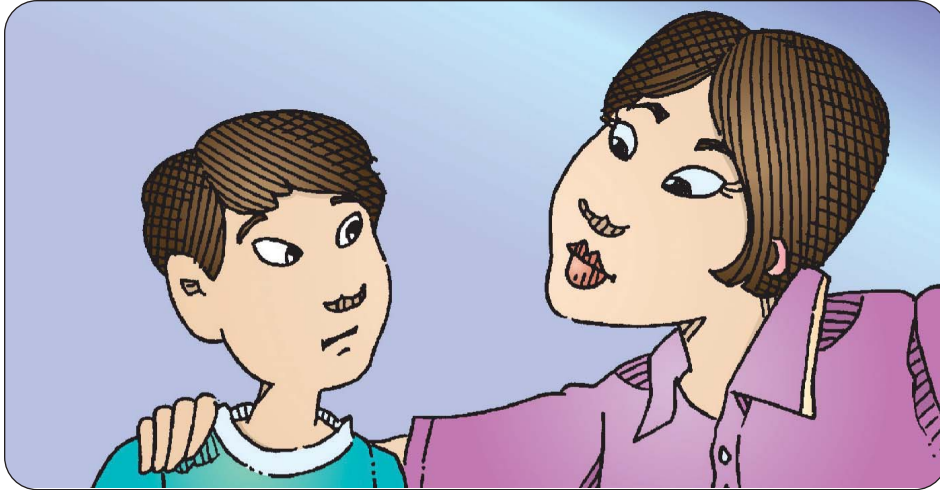


Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



Be honest, brief when talking to your child about serious topics

Your child has a problem with a teacher or he had a fight with a friend. And as a parent, you want to share your thoughts about these and other important subjects with your child.

But here's something to remember. It's not only *what* you say, but *how* you say it. If you want your child to listen to your advice, you need to know how to talk so he'll listen. Here are five tips:

1. **Be honest.** When your child was two, he thought you had all the answers. But today, you both know you can't be an expert in everything. That's okay—when you don't know the answer, say so.
2. **Consider how much to share.** If you are getting divorced, your child doesn't need to know all of the details. He just needs to know

that he'll be safe. If you're sick, talk about your treatment. Spare children, especially young children, troubling details.

3. **Be brief.** Kids simply turn off a lecture. You're more likely to get your point across if you can express your thoughts briefly.
4. **Respect your child's views.** You don't have to agree with your child, but you are more likely to change his mind if you talk *with* him, not *at* him. So ask your child what he thinks about an issue.
5. **Don't yell.** If you feel yourself getting angry, take a break. Talking louder won't help you persuade your child that you're right.

Source: Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo, *How to Talk to Your Kids About Really Important Things*, ISBN: 1-555-42611-5 (Jossey-Bass Publishers, a division of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1-800-956-7739, www.JosseyBass.com).

Explore a few family-friendly websites



You can have fun and spend quality learning time with your child on the computer. You and

your child can:

- **Explore nature.** Wonder about that plant in your back yard? Is it a weed or a flower? You'll find the answer at www.backyardnature.net. There are also fun nature activities.
- **Learn more about a favorite author.** Many children's authors have websites that will keep kids reading! Poet Shel Silverstein, author of *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, has one of the best. Visit www.shelsilverstein.com/indexSite.html.
- **Keep up with the news.** Many news outlets have kid-friendly sites. Time for Kids has the latest news from around the world. Visit www.timeforkids.com/TFK/kids.
- **Go to the zoo.** The National Zoo's webcams will let you get a live look at pandas, kiwis and tigers! Learn about endangered animals around the world. Visit <http://nationalzoo.si.edu>.

Teach your child to look at the pictures in textbooks for clues



Kids often think the pictures in their textbooks are mostly there to fill up space. So they often pay little or no attention to them.

Pictures are usually included in textbooks to give students a clearer idea of what the chapter is about. They can also keep students interested in what they are learning.

One way you can help your child learn more from a textbook is by teaching her how to look carefully at the pictures. Before your child reads a chapter, have her look at the

pictures. Here are some questions she should ask herself:

- **What does the picture show?**
Explain in your own words.
- **What details do you see?** Look carefully.
- **What is this chapter about?**
Why do you think the authors included this picture?

Once your child has studied the picture, have her read the chapter. She will understand more and remember more of what she read.

Source: Betty Roe, Barbara Stoodt and Paul Burns, *Secondary School Literacy Instruction: The Content Areas*, ISBN: 0-618-64293-8 (Houghton Mifflin, 1-800-225-3362, www.hmco.com).

Offer your child the right 'level' of book to encourage reading



Some kids seem to inhale books. They always have a book handy and they are always reading something they like.

But there are other kids who seem to have trouble finding a book that "fits." Help your child choose the right book for pleasure reading by dividing books into three levels:

1. **Holiday books.** These are books that will be easy for your child to read. In fact, they may be books your child has read over and over.
2. **Just rights.** These are the books that can help your child stretch and grow a little. Most of them will have one or two words on a page that he doesn't know.
3. **Challenges.** These are books your child might like to read, but isn't quite ready for yet. There may be too many new words.

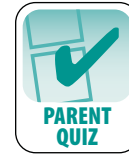
Which level books should your child read? All of them. Most of his reading will be *just rights*. His teacher or the

librarian can help him find books that meet his interests and are at the right level.

But sometimes, he should be able to relax with a *holiday book*. And together, by reading aloud with your child, you can tackle more challenging texts.

Source: Nancie Atwell, "The Pleasure Principle," *Instructor Magazine*, January/February 2007 (Scholastic, Inc., 1-800-632-1586, www.scholastic.com/instructor).

Do you teach your child how to be wise with money?



Teaching kids about money is one good way to help them become more responsible. Here's a quiz to see how well

you are helping your child learn to take responsibility for money.

Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the statements below:

___ 1. **I give my child** an allowance so she can practice managing her own money.

___ 2. **I encourage my child** to save some allowance money. We also have a savings account for each child.

___ 3. **I have established** family savings goals. We work together as a family to reach those goals.

___ 4. **I "think out loud"** about money. At the grocery store, I may say, "If I buy the larger jar of jelly, we will actually save money over the long run."

___ 5. **I look for ways** to give my child choices about money. "You could have two pairs of these jeans or one pair of the expensive ones."

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child develop healthy, responsible attitudes about money. For your *no* answers, try that idea from the quiz.



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Send ideas to **Parents make the difference!**, Editorial Staff, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474 (or www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd). Materials sent cannot be returned.

Play the 'huddle game' to teach your child how to cooperate



In school, your child must learn how to cooperate. To cooperate, he must listen to and respect the needs and opinions of

others. He must identify common goals and agree on solutions.

To teach the importance of cooperation, play the huddle game:

1. **Have family members** come face-to-face and huddle like football players.
2. **Imagine you can make one wish**, but it can't be selfish. It must be something that will make your home a better place to live.

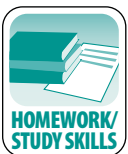
3. **Brainstorm and discuss** among yourselves the best thing you can ask for and why. Make sure everyone has a say.

This game teaches your child that he belongs to a larger whole—a family and society. And that, by working together, people can make a change.

Practice huddling whenever your family or your child has a problem to solve or decision to make.

Source: Jon Oliver and Michael Ryan, *Lesson One: The ABCs of Life: The Skills We All Need but Were Never Taught*, ISBN: 0-7432-3792-7 (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

Promote homework success with a study spot, a plan & a checklist



Routines help kids (and adults) get things done without thinking about them. To develop a daily homework routine that

really works, help your child:

1. **Set up a regular place and time** for homework. Let your child make a "Do Not Disturb" sign to post. This is a cue to everyone that homework is serious business.
2. **Make a homework plan** at the start of homework time. What does she have to do today? What can she do alone? Are there tasks for which she'll need help? (Does she need to go to the library? Buy poster board?)
3. **Make a homework chart.** Post it where your child can see it. Before homework is finished, your child should answer these questions:
 - Is your name on the paper? Is the date on the paper?
 - Did you follow your teacher's directions?

- Is it neat? Can your teacher read your writing?
- Does each sentence begin with a capital letter?
- Does each sentence end with the correct punctuation mark?
- Have you checked to see that words are spelled correctly?
- If it is a math problem, did you complete all the steps?
- Did you check your work?
- Can your teacher read your numbers?
- Are the numbers lined up correctly?

Source: Mary Ann Smialek, *Don't Miss the Bus!* ISBN: 1-57886-212-4 (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1-800-462-6420, www.rowmaneducation.com).

"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."

—Kay Redfield Jamison,
Contemporary American
Professor of Psychiatry

Q: My fifth-grade daughter was picked on by a group of girls last year. She was miserable. So I was horrified when her teacher told me she's part of a group who is mean to another girl. (She even uninvited that girl to her birthday party.) What can I do at home—and how can I work with the school—to stop this mean and unacceptable behavior?

Questions & Answers

A: Ouch. It hurts nearly as much to watch your child being mean as to watch her being a victim. Your daughter is typical, though—most girls will be in both roles at some time.

Still, it's important to stop this behavior from continuing. Here's how:

1. **Have a long talk** with your daughter. Explain that you understand she's happy to feel part of a group again. And she's probably desperate to stay there. But if it was wrong for other girls to pick on her last year, it's just as wrong for her to do it this year. Someone has to take a stand, and she's the one. After all, she knows how the other girl is feeling.
2. **Brainstorm with your daughter** ways she can reach out to this girl. She can start by making the girl welcome at her party.
3. **Talk with the school.** Let the teacher know what you're doing at home and ask for her help in class. She can stress how she expects all kids to behave in class. She can teach some skills for getting along with others. And she can recognize that meanness does not have to be a regular part of growing up.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Building Respect

Build respect by encouraging a sense of gratitude



Teachers want students who are respectful and well-mannered in their classrooms. And one way you can teach your child respect is to help him develop a sense of gratitude.

Grateful children are more aware of how others have helped them. They say *thank you*. They have a positive attitude and are more likely to show respect for people and things in their lives—including teachers and school property.

Truly grateful children don't just "put on their manners" on demand or to impress others. They use manners to be respectful and to make the lives of others more pleasant.

To encourage gratefulness:

- **Model it.** Say how lucky you are to have your family, your community and your child's school. Don't always want what you don't have.
- **Express your gratitude** to your child. Thank him for his help, his kindness and being who he is.
- **Don't give in** when your child pleads for a treat or present. This rewards begging, not waiting for what he wants. It creates an ungrateful, impatient adult.
- **Tell your child** you love him and appreciate him for his efforts.
- **Encourage your child** to keep a "Gratitude Journal." Each day, have him write down two or three things he's grateful for. Ask him to share a few of his entries.

Source: Jill Rigby, *Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World*, ISBN: 1-58229-574-9 (Howard Books/Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.howardpublishing.com).

Draw an iceberg to help your child see the strengths of others

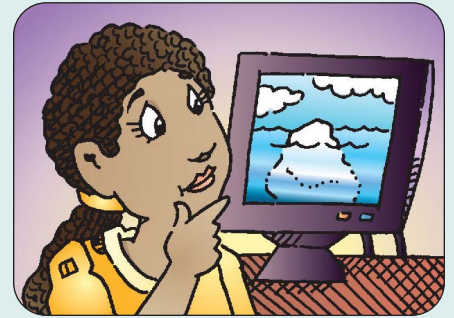
Kids sometimes make snap decisions about teachers or other students. Here's a way to help your child look a little deeper and develop respect for others:

Show your child a picture of an iceberg. Only a small part shows above the water. A much larger part is hidden beneath the water.

Have your child draw an iceberg to represent her own qualities. What do people see first? What can they learn later?

Ask your child to think about a person she might not have liked at first. Ask her what hidden qualities made her want that person as a friend.

Help your child use this idea to think about a person she might not like today. Ask, "What are the things



you see 'above the water' that you don't like so much?"

Then ask your child to look for the person's hidden qualities. For example, someone who seems stubborn might stick with her in a tough spot.

Source: Barbara E. Oehlberg, *Reaching and Teaching Stressed and Anxious Learners in Grades 4-8*, ISBN: 1-412-91724-7 (Corwin Press, a Sage Publications Company, 1-800-233-9936, www.CorwinPress.com).

Use chores to boost your child's self-respect, responsibility



Nothing builds a child's self-respect more than being responsible and making decisions. And chores let your elementary-age child do both.

To make chores a positive learning experience for your child:

- **Assign age-appropriate chores.** Your child should be able to clean his room, feed a pet, set the table, fold laundry or vacuum.
- **Show your child how** you want the chores done. Give him step-by-step instructions.
- **Be clear about** when you want a chore done.

- **Don't criticize** your child if a chore isn't done perfectly. Compliment what he's done well. Later, ask him to do part of the job he forgot.
- **Never redo a chore** your child has completed.
- **Don't nag** to get your child to complete a chore. Instead, set a consequence for when a chore's not done.
- **Praise your child** for effort and improvement.

Source: Joan Message Barbuto, *The ABCs of Parenting: A Guide to Help Parents and Caretakers Handle Childrearing Problems*, ISBN: 1-56875-062-5 (R&E Publishers, 408-866-6303).