

Elementary School Parents[®]

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make the difference!



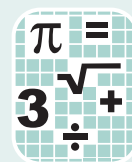
Five strategies to give your child's vocabulary a boost!

Readng at home is one of the best ways to boost your child's vocabulary. That's because reading exposes your child to new ideas, concepts and words.

Here are five effective strategies that will help you increase your child's vocabulary:

1. **Read different kinds** of books to your child. If you usually read fiction, go to the library and get a book that explains how something works instead. Check out a book about a sport or activity your child enjoys. Or, read a biography about a person she admires.
2. **Look for words** your child might not know as you read. "It says here that George Washington went to school to become a *surveyor*. What do you think that word means?"
3. **Listen for new words** as you're watching TV. News programs often include words your child may not know. "Have you ever heard the word *tsunami* before? Let's look it up to see what it means."
4. **Pull out the thesaurus.** Find synonyms for words your child uses often when writing or speaking.
5. **Help your child create** her own dictionary. All you need is a notebook with a page for each letter. When your child discovers a new word that she wants to remember, have her write it and its definition in the notebook. Review those words from time to time.

Help your child have some fun with fractions!



Understanding fractions can be a challenge for some children. To help your child learn

fractions, have fun with hands-on activities like these:

- **Measure up.** Give your child measuring spoons and cups. Have him pour one cup of water into one glass. Then have him guess: How many half cups will it take to fill another glass the same size? How many quarter cups or third cups?
- **Take a fraction walk.** Have your child count how many cars you pass. Then figure how many (what fraction) of them are a certain color. Take turns choosing a color and seeing who has the largest fraction.
- **Change that recipe.** Ask your child to rewrite the amount of each ingredient to double the recipe or cut it in half.
- **Eat your fractions.** Give your child 12, 24 or 36 pieces of cereal. Let him divide them into halves, fourths, etc. Or, share a pizza and ask some questions. If the pizza is cut into 12 slices, how many slices equal one-half or one-third of the pizza?

Model the respectful behavior you'd like to see from your child



Being respectful is critical to success in school and life. However, when it comes to teaching your child about respect, the idea isn't to *teach* her at all. It's to *show* her. By demonstrating what respect looks like, you'll go a long way toward helping your child become respectful.

Here are some simple ways to demonstrate respect every day:

- **Be honest.** Tell your child the truth. Admit your mistakes instead of blaming others for them. Apologize (even to your child) when you are wrong.
- **Be dependable.** If you tell your child you'll do something, do it. Earn her respect by proving that you're reliable. And when you can't do something, be honest about it.

- **Be kind.** Don't insult or belittle your child when she makes a mistake.
- **Be fair.** Don't pass judgment on your child or punish her for something before learning all the facts. Show respect by taking the time to get her side of the story.
- **Be polite.** Say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your child. Don't barge into her room, either. Knock first.

"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

—Richard Bach

Celebrate Geography Awareness Week with learning activities



You probably remember filling in the locations of countries and continents on blank maps when you were in school.

But geography is about much more than maps. It's about how places shape people and how people shape places.

Help your child celebrate Geography Awareness Week (Nov. 11-17) with these learning activities:

- **Look it up!** When you and your child hear a news story about an unfamiliar place, locate it on a map. Then, challenge each other to learn a few facts about the location and the people who live there.
- **Go on a virtual trip.** Visit your library and check out books about a country you and your child would like to visit. Together, research fun things to do on your "trip."
- **Explore your community.** Help your child discover why your town is located where it is. Who first settled there? How are you and your child connected to the rest of the world?
- **Make a map.** Challenge your child to draw a map of how to get from your house to school, church or a friend's. Then, follow the map.
- **Share family history.** Tell your child where your ancestors came from. Find these places on a map. If possible, learn about the routes your ancestors traveled when they came to this country. Where do your relatives live now? Again, check the map.

Do you let your child take charge of homework?



In homes everywhere, parents and kids argue about homework. To avoid conflict, some parents simply do the

homework for their children!

Are you making sure your child takes responsibility for homework? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

1. **Have you told your child** that homework is his responsibility? You offer support, but don't do the work.
2. **Does your child have** a regular study time every day? Does he do schoolwork during that time?
3. **Do you give your child** some choice in *how* he does homework, such as choosing which subject to tackle first?
4. **Do you look over** your child's homework to see that it's finished?
5. **Do you contact** the teacher if your child faces regular struggles with homework?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean your child is taking responsibility for homework. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
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Eliminate morning ‘rush hour’ with routines, games & themes



In many families, “rush hour” begins before anyone even walks out the door:

Your child doesn’t have time for breakfast. He may race out the door while leaving homework and school supplies behind. And even then, he may miss the bus.

If this sounds familiar, it’s time for you to develop a new morning “traffic pattern.” To tame the chaos:

- **Prepare for the day** the night before. Help your child make his lunch and pick out his school clothes. Have him make sure his backpack and other items are ready to go and by the door.
- **Help your child** figure out how much time he really needs in the morning to get ready. Tell him it is his responsibility to set his alarm clock—and get up when it goes off.
- **Use charts and checklists.** Post a list of all the steps your child must take to get ready in the morning: brush teeth, brush hair, get dressed, make the bed. Post another checklist of things that need to go to school. If it’s Tuesday, where’s the library book? If it’s Wednesday, does your child have his shoes for gym?
- **Make it a game.** Try playing Beat the Clock. If it took 20 minutes for your child to get to the kitchen for breakfast yesterday, can he do it in 18 minutes today? Let’s be honest. Some kids are late because they dawdle.
- **Create fun breakfast themes—**Waffle Wednesday, Fruity Friday, etc. Having a schedule takes the guesswork out of breakfast and may motivate your child to actually sit down and eat!

Take advantage of opportunities to strengthen thinking skills



To develop your child’s thinking skills, challenge him to apply concepts he’s learned to various situations. A child who

has learned to count, for example, can get out the correct number of plates when setting the table.

Help your child strengthen his thinking skills in common elementary school subjects, such as:

- **Language arts.** Before, during and after reading, encourage your child to ask and answer questions that start with *What*, *Why* and *What if*. “What do you think the character will do?” “Why is the character doing that?” “What if the character had made a different decision?”
- **Math.** Challenge your child to catch mistakes. For example, you might count by twos and say, “2, 4, 6, 7.” Can he figure out what’s wrong? Do activities together that involve building and sorting. “Let’s build a tiny model of our car.” “Can you help me reorganize this shelf of canned food?”
- **Science.** Watch nature programs and read books about nature. Encourage your child to use what he learns. “The leaves are falling off that tree. What’s that type of tree called?” “The flowers we planted last year grew back. Are they *annuals* or *perennials*?” “Look at that fly. Do flies have four wings or two?”

Q: Last year, my daughter put off her science project until the very last minute. She finished it on time, but stressed out our entire family in the process! What can we do to make sure this year is different?

Questions & Answers

A: Science fair projects teach students—and sometimes parents—valuable lessons. Last year, you learned what *not* to do.

Your daughter is obviously a person who can meet a deadline. So your job this year is to help her set *a lot* of deadlines before the science project is actually due.

Encourage your child to:

1. **Select her topic early.** The sooner she knows what she is going to do, the more time she will have to do it.
2. **Make a list** of all the things she will need to do to complete the project. She should include the trip to the store for supplies and the time it will take to create a display. Have her build in at least two days for the unexpected that often seems to happen.
3. **Set a deadline** for each part of the project. Make sure your child knows the consequence for missing a deadline. (If she hasn’t done her work, for example, she certainly doesn’t have time to watch TV.)
4. **Post the list of deadlines** in a place where you’ll both see it every day. Then, as your child achieves each step, have her cross off that deadline.

If she follows these steps, your daughter will not only learn something about science this year, she’ll also learn some valuable time management skills. Good luck!

It Matters: Homework & Study Skills

Preparation is key to your child's test success



Your child's teacher announces there will be a test next week. "Please start preparing now," she tells families.

What steps should you follow?

It's a good idea to:

- **Clarify what will be tested.** Have your child check with the teacher to find out what the test will cover. She should also find out what kind of test it will be (fill in the blanks, multiple choice, etc.).
- **Make a plan.** Studying works best when it's done over time—not at the last minute. Help your child schedule several study sessions and write them on the calendar.
- **Think of ways to reinforce the material.** Your child could make flash cards or take a practice test. You could quiz each other on the material.
- **Encourage good habits.** In addition to doing homework and studying, your child needs rest and nourishment to do her best in school. A regular bedtime and healthy meals go a long way!
- **Make attendance a priority.** It's hard for students to keep up when they miss school or arrive late. Reduce stress on test day by making sure your child gets to school on time.
- **Ease anxiety.** Make plenty of positive comments. "You are prepared for this test. You're going to do great on it!" There's no need to pressure your child. Support and preparation are all she needs!

Five ways to make the most of your child's report card

Report card time can make parents almost as nervous as students. Is your child on track? Is he learning what he needs to know? Are you doing all you can to support him in school?

Use your child's report card as an opportunity to review his progress in school and talk about your expectations. Be sure to:

1. **Take it seriously.** A report card can't tell you everything about how your child is doing, but your child's teacher spends a lot of time making sure that the report card shows a snapshot of where your child is now. Read it carefully.
2. **Remain calm**—especially if your child's grades weren't what you'd expected. Wait until you can talk calmly about what you and your child can do to improve his grades.
3. **Find something to praise.** Did your child earn a higher grade in math than he did last year? Did the



teacher make positive comments about his behavior or work habits?

4. **Let your child know** what you expect. Say things like, "You don't have to be the best. But I do expect you to do your best." Remind him that effort is as important as ability.
5. **Contact the teacher** if you or your child has any questions about his report card.

Stay involved and review your child's homework every day



Homework is a vital link between home and school. In addition to helping students master concepts, homework gives parents a sneak peek into what their children are learning in school.

Experts say that reviewing your child's homework is important no matter what grade she is in—even if you don't understand it. Your daily interest sends the message that learning is important.

Be sure to:

- **Set aside time every day** to look at your child's homework. Even if you're not at home when your child does her homework, always ask to see it.
- **Ask your child** to tell you about her homework. What did she like best about an assignment? Was it easy or was it challenging?
- **Praise your child's effort.** Compliment homework that is completed and neat.