

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

September 2019



#### SHORT NOTES

##### Be considerate

Family meals offer plenty of chances for your youngster to practice being considerate. As you serve yourselves food, you might say, "Make sure to leave enough so everyone gets some." Or if there's one piece of chicken left, encourage your child to ask if anyone wants to split it instead of taking the whole thing for himself.

##### Tired after school!

As your youngster gets used to the routine of a new school year, she may be more tired than usual. Be sure she's getting 9–11 hours of sleep each night. Also, try to keep evenings low-key by not planning too many activities.

##### Cardboard box "origami"

Before tossing boxes in the recycling bin, use them to build your child's spatial sense and math skills. Have him pull each box apart at the seams and lay it flat. Can he tape it back together? *Idea:* Challenge him to make a mini pizza or cereal box using construction paper and tape.

##### Worth quoting

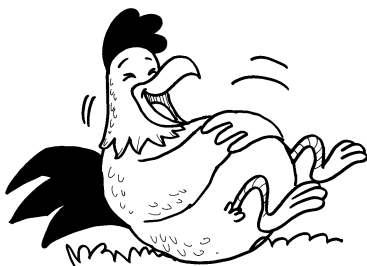
"Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

Fred Rogers

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How many eggs did the farmer collect from his biggest rooster?

**A:** Zero. Roosters don't lay eggs!



## The ABCs of school success

School success begins at home! While your child is learning her ABCs, 123s, and much more, she can get the year off to a great start with these *other* ABCs.

##### **A**ttend every day

More time in class = more learning. Help your youngster attend school regularly by scheduling doctor appointments and family vacations outside of school hours. Also, she can cut down on sick days by eating her fruits and vegetables, washing her hands often, and getting plenty of physical activity.

##### **B**e organized

Forgotten homework? A backpack that doubles as a black hole? Good organizational skills prevent those problems. Together, brainstorm ways for your child to get—and stay—organized. For instance, she could choose a special folder for bringing home and returning homework and use a zipper bag to store pencils and other supplies.



##### **C**heck in daily

Designate a time each day to sit down with your youngster, talk about what she did in school, and review papers she brought home. You might read a story she wrote or look over her math test, for example. This simple routine shows her that you care about what she's learning. Plus, you'll notice where she's doing well or if she's struggling with anything so you can follow up with her teacher.♥

#### Back to school...for parents

School rules keep students safe and let teachers do their job. Show your youngster that parents can help by following rules—just like he does. Here are a few examples:

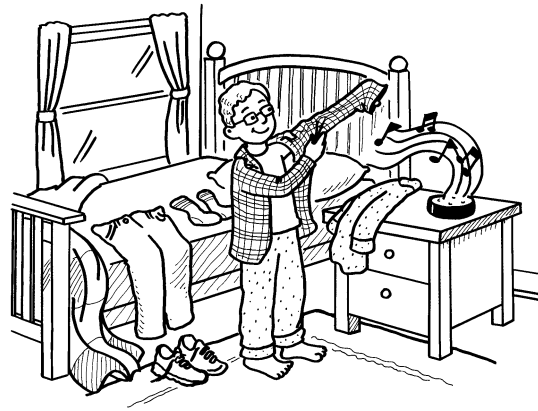
- Check in at the office as soon as you enter the school building, and be prepared to show identification.
- If you drive your child to school, be familiar with drop-off and pickup procedures. For instance, stay in your car, obey staff and patrol officers, and help your youngster exit the car quickly and safely.
- Follow rules for sending food to school. Is there a no-peanut policy? Are birthday treats allowed?
- Contact the teacher to arrange visits ahead of time rather than dropping in.♥



# Getting out the door

Mornings help to set the tone for your child's school day. Consider these ideas for a routine that will send him off to school relaxed and ready to learn.

**Add a "cushion."** Does your youngster need to walk out the door at 8 a.m.? Have him pretend he has to leave by 7:45 a.m. and adjust his routine accordingly. If he's ready early, great! The cushion of extra time will make the morning feel more relaxed—and maybe even give him time to read for pleasure or review spelling words.



**Simplify breakfast.** Make healthy, ready-to-eat breakfast items ahead of time with your child. Overnight oatmeal, hard-boiled eggs, cheese cubes with fruit, and favorite sandwiches are all good bets. *Idea:* Let your youngster eat breakfast at school. Enjoying a hot, healthy meal with friends is a nice way to start the day.

**Use a musical countdown.**

Suggest that your child create a song playlist that fits the amount of time he has to get ready for school. Then, turn on the music when he wakes up. Once he's familiar with the order of the songs, he'll know how much time he has left just from listening to the music.♥

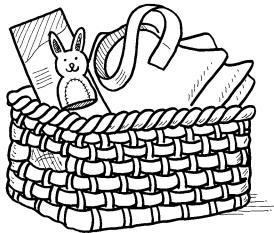


**PARENT TO PARENT**

## Basket of clues

My daughter Aisha loves that her teacher begins each morning by giving the children clues about what they'll learn that day. At back-to-school night, the teacher mentioned that this lets them practice reading and thinking logically, so I decided to try it at home.

The next Saturday morning, I left a basket of clues on the coffee table about what our family would do in the afternoon. It included a finger puppet, a tote bag, and a bookmark. I added a message: "We will have fun at this place *and* bring some of the fun home in the bag." Aisha figured out that we were going to the library to watch a puppet show and check out books.



Now on Friday nights, Aisha asks me to make a clue basket. Sometimes, she even thinks of an activity she'd like to do and writes clues for me.♥

**ACTIVITY CORNER**

## Time out for nature

Time spent enjoying nature has been shown to reduce

stress and improve children's—and adults'—mental health. The outdoors is a great place to learn, too. Enjoy these five activities with your youngster.

1. Search for spiderwebs, and let her "collect" them by taking photos with your phone.
2. Find a place to sit quietly and listen to the birds. Can your child spot the birds that make each sound you hear?
3. Take a few deep breaths, and tell each other what outdoor scents you smell (pine trees, flowers).
4. Look for different types of rocks. She can sort them according to size, shape, or color.
5. Explore favorite outdoor places in all kinds of weather. Splash in puddles on a rainy morning. On a sunny afternoon, observe the shadows that leaves make on the ground as the breeze blows them around.♥



**Q & A**

## Persistence pays off

**Q:** My son is always eager to try activities, such as karate or student council. But then he'll ask to drop out because they're "too hard" or "too much work." How should I handle this?

**A:** Many youngsters are surprised when something that looks easy turns out to take hard work. Learning to find ways to overcome challenges will help your son stick with activities—and develop persistence.

When he mentions that a karate move or a student council job is taking too much effort, ask him what, specifically, is challenging. Then together, think of solutions. For example, if he's struggling with karate moves that involve balancing on one foot, brainstorm fun ways to improve his balance.

Over time, your child will get in the habit of looking for solutions instead of giving up.♥



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October 2019

### SHORT NOTES

#### Estimate everything!

Weave estimation into daily life to build your youngster's math skills. While cooking, you might ask, "How many cherry tomatoes do you think are in that container?" Or in a waiting room, challenge her to estimate the number of ceiling tiles. Have her count to check. The more she practices, the better she'll get at estimating.

#### Take initiative

Part of developing initiative is learning to recognize what needs to be done. Instead of guiding your child through each step in a task, get him in the routine of figuring out what to do next. If he's clearing the table and forgets to wipe it off, say, "Take a look at the table—what's the last step?"

#### Family fire drills

Use National Fire Prevention Week (October 6–12) to create a fire escape plan with your youngster. Encourage her to draw a map of your home with two exits per room and a meeting place outside. Then, hold a fire drill. *Note:* Studies show that many kids sleep through smoke alarms, so be sure your plan includes waking everyone up.

#### Worth quoting

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."

*Chinese proverb*

### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What do you get when you cross a stream and a brook?

**A:** Wet feet.



## Secrets of better behavior

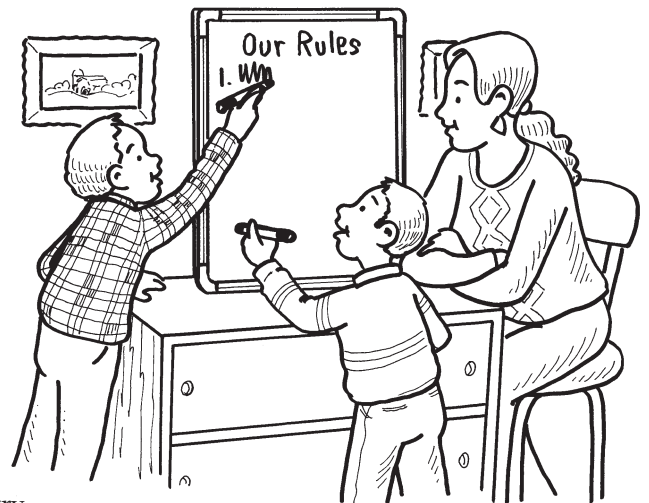
It's no secret that parents want their children to behave appropriately. But what really works? Try focusing on teaching your child to behave rather than punishing him for misbehavior, and you're likely to see better results. Consider these tips.

#### Be a mirror

Your youngster looks to you for guidance, so model the behavior you expect. For example, if he sees you staying calm when you're angry, he'll be less likely to throw fits when he's upset. Talk through your actions, too. You might say, "I had a stressful day at work. I'm going to relax with my book for a little while so I'm not cranky."

#### Make rules together

Children find it easier to remember and follow rules that they have a role in creating. Sit down together, and write a list. Be sure your youngster understands the reason behind each rule. For instance, ask, "Why shouldn't we leave things on the stairs?" (Because someone could trip



and fall.) *Tip:* If you need to add or change a rule, include him in that discussion, too.

#### Highlight success

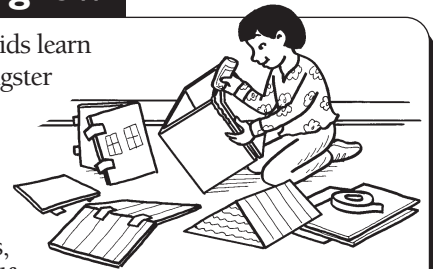
When you praise your child, emphasize the good feelings he gets from behaving well. Saying "You must be proud of yourself for waiting so patiently" gives him a sense of accomplishment. That feeling of pride will motivate him to repeat the behavior in the future.♥

## Mistakes make your brain grow

Did you know that mistakes actually help kids learn more? Use these ideas to encourage your youngster to make the most of her mistakes:

- Give your child room to "mess up." You might suspect that masking tape isn't strong enough to hold her project together. But she'll gain more from the experience if she tries, fails, and comes up with a new solution all by herself.

- Help your youngster put mistakes in perspective. Perhaps she forgot to include an important point during her class presentation. Ask her what part went well—maybe her graphics were cool and her classmates seemed interested in her topic.♥

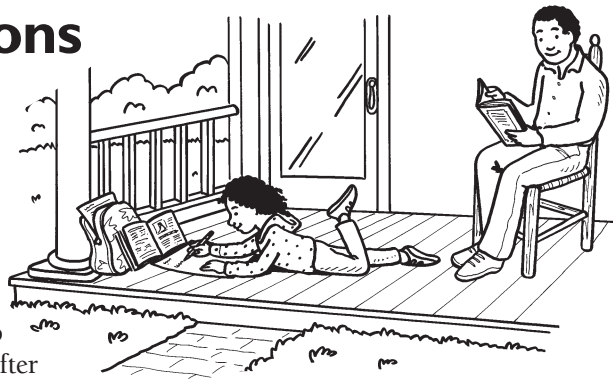


# Homework solutions

Whether your child is new to homework or has been doing it for years, your support can help her do her best. That's important, because homework reinforces what she's learning in school. Here's how to set her up for success.

## Find a good schedule

Set aside a specific time for homework so it becomes a habit, perhaps right before or after dinner. Also, suggest that she figure out a plan that works best for her. She could start with the easiest assignment to gain momentum or get the hardest one out of the way first.



## Eliminate distractions

Make sure your child turns off electronics before she starts homework. Also, you might encourage everyone in the house to have "quiet time" while she does her assignments. Maybe you'll read or pay bills while younger siblings color, for instance.

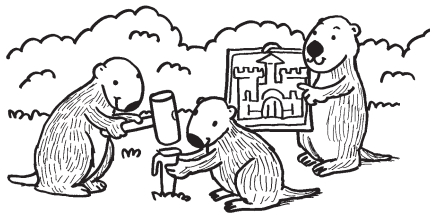
## Troubleshoot problems

When your youngster gets stuck, offer to help—but avoid telling her the answers. If she's confused by the directions, try reading them together. Or if she's struggling with an addition problem, offer to walk her through a few sample problems in the back of her math book.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT Engineer a maze

Ever get lost in a corn maze? That's what happened to our family last week at a fall festival. When we made our way out, the farmer explained that engineering and technology were used to create the maze.



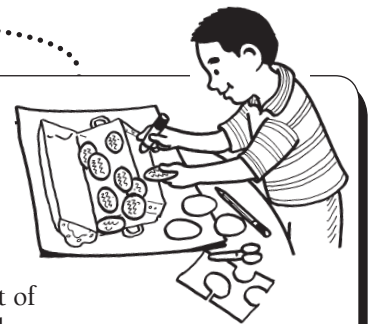
My son Mason was fascinated. We learned that a designer drew the maze on a computer. Then, an engineer generated GPS coordinates, which guided the farmer as he mowed the corn into the maze.

At home, Mason decided to create his own maze. He drew a castle-shaped design and plotted it out in the yard with tent stakes. Next, he arranged pool noodles, lawn chairs, and other outdoor items between the stakes. When it was ready, he invited friends over to go through his maze.

Now Mason is busy planning his next maze. I can't wait to see what it is!♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Be a true friend

Children who form friendships with classmates tend to do better in school. Inspire your youngster to "treasure" his friends with this writing activity.



- 1. Draw:** Have him draw a treasure chest on a sheet of paper and make "coins" by cutting circles out of yellow paper.
- 2. Identify:** Take turns naming things you each value in a friendship. *Examples:* Being loyal, enjoying the same things, helping each other. Your child can write each idea on a separate coin.
- 3. Discuss:** Let him glue the coins onto his treasure chest. As he adds each one, you can both share real-life examples from your own friendships. Your youngster might say, "Raul and I like to read together at language arts time," and you could say, "My friend Jess helped us by bringing meals over after your sister was born."

Hang up his treasure chest as a reminder of qualities he'll look for in his classmates—and will remember to show in himself.♥

## Q & A The parent-teacher team

**Q:** I want to be more involved in my daughter's education. Where should I start?

**A:** Teaming up with your child's teacher is a great way to get started. Send the teacher a nice email, perhaps about a classroom activity your daughter enjoyed, and let him know you'd like to stay in touch throughout

the year. You might ask if you can volunteer in the classroom or from home.

Also, look over papers the teacher sends home. You'll see how your child is doing in various subjects. Then, if she's struggling with anything, you can reach out to the teacher for advice.

Finally, tell your daughter that you and her teacher are a team, with the same goal—helping her succeed in school.♥



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November 2019

#### SHORT NOTES



#### Promises matter

Before you promise your child something—for instance, that you'll take him to the playground—make sure you'll be able to follow through. This teaches him that he can count on you, and he'll learn to keep promises, too. *Tip:* If needed, include contingencies. (“We’ll go as long as it’s not raining.”)

#### Speak up about allergies

Family gatherings are good opportunities for your youngster to speak up about food allergies, whether she has one herself or is being considerate of others. She might ask the host if a casserole contains eggs or tell a cousin who’s allergic to dairy that there’s milk in the mashed potatoes.

#### Boost working memory

This activity improves your child’s working (or short-term) memory. Have him close his eyes while you draw three emojis (cupcake, sun, leaf). Let him study the paper for five seconds, flip it over, and try to name the emojis. Repeat the activity, adding one more each time. How many can he remember?

#### Worth quoting

“When you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.”  
Zig Ziglar

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What’s black and white and black and white and black and white?

**A:** A penguin rolling down a hill.



## An atmosphere of learning

When families create a supportive learning environment at home, children are more successful in the classroom. Use these tips to make your home a great place for your youngster to learn.

#### Stock up

Fill your house with items your child can use to explore and investigate. Visit the library regularly so you always have plenty of books. Have her set aside a drawer for math and science supplies (ruler, measuring cups and spoons, food coloring, seeds). Also, display a map or globe—when she reads or hears about a place, she can discover where it’s located.

#### Build on interests

Notice what your youngster is into, such as dinosaurs or music, and help her learn more about it. Read nonfiction books or watch documentaries together. Let her make a hallway gallery based on her interests. She could create and hang up posters to share interesting facts and photos with family members.



#### Learn together

Learn something new as a family. You might work on American Sign Language and then practice together. Or learn to code or knit. You’ll enjoy a new hobby as you expand your knowledge. Also, plan special nights where you play board games. Try ones that build language skills (Scrabble, Boggle) or involve math or logic (Monopoly, chess).♥

#### I’m thankful for...

What is your family grateful for? Try this idea to find out—and teach your child about gratitude.

**Pick categories.** Choose six crayons, and assign each color a category. *Example:* red = person, blue = place, green = object, yellow = food, orange = animal, purple = your choice. Place the crayons in a bowl, and give each person a sheet of paper.

**Draw and write.** Take turns selecting a crayon, drawing a heart on your paper, and writing something you’re grateful for that matches the category. Your youngster might write “My Aunt Amy” in red and “Macaroni and cheese” in yellow.

**Share.** Once everyone has a heart of every color, read what’s in your “hearts” to each other. Display the papers for a nice reminder to be grateful all year long!♥

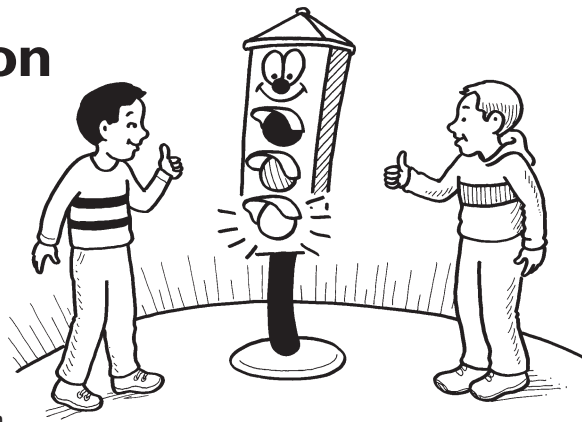


# Conflict resolution know-how

Healthy conflict resolution skills help your child maintain friendships, solve problems, and stand up for himself in positive ways. Share these strategies.

## Red light! Green light!

Problems are easier to solve when your youngster is calm. Suggest that he think of a feeling like anger or frustration as a “red light”—a signal to stop and think. Say he and a friend are arguing over the topic for their group



presentation. He might take a few deep breaths or walk away for a little while. Once he calms down (the light turns green), he may be ready to think of a solution, such as combining their ideas to create a whole new topic.

## “I” statements

When your child is trying to resolve a conflict, suggest that he start each statement with “I” instead of “you.” *Example:* “I get angry when I’m yelled at” rather

than “You make me angry.” He’ll put the focus on his own feelings rather than blaming the other person—which can keep the conflict from escalating.♥

## Q & A Attend parent-teacher conferences

**Q:** My son usually gets good grades and isn’t having any problems in school. Do I still need to go to a parent-teacher conference?

**A:** Yes! A conference lets you and your child’s teacher exchange information beyond what’s on his report card. Plus, meeting with the teacher is one way to keep the lines of communication open.



The teacher will talk about your son’s strengths and areas for improvement. For instance, he might say he has good work habits but could participate more in class. And you may get to see his writer’s notebook or science journal. You’ll also learn how he’s doing socially—does he get along well with others?

Finally, ask the teacher what you can do at home to support your son.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Persuasive writing: Buy my product

Could your child convince someone to buy a rock? What about an ice cube? This silly family activity lets her practice persuasive writing by creating a commercial for an unlikely “product.”



- 1. Decide what to sell.** Ask each family member to think of something you probably wouldn’t buy in real life, such as an empty cardboard box, a snowball, or a brick.
- 2. Write a script.** Each person should make up a commercial advertising her product. Include a vivid description of your item and convincing reasons to buy it. *Example:* “Introducing our smooth, perfectly square ice cube! Just this single cube will keep your small glass of lemonade nice and cool—without watering it down.”
- 3. Present your ads.** Take turns performing your commercials in your best TV-announcer voice. The advertisement voted most persuasive wins!♥

## PARENT TO PARENT Mix math with fitness

When my daughter Elizabeth was working on addition facts, we invented a game to help her practice—and to give all of us some exercise.

She wrote the numbers 1–10 on separate index cards, and I hid them around our yard. Then, she wrote the same numbers on separate craft sticks and put the sticks (number ends down) in a cup. We took turns drawing a stick, running to find a number card, and

adding the two numbers to get our score for that turn. So if Elizabeth drew the 10 stick and got a 6 card, her score would be 16, since  $10 + 6 = 16$ . The winner was the person with the highest score after all the sticks were used.

Our game has grown with Elizabeth. Once she mastered basic addition facts, we wrote bigger numbers to play with. And now that she’s learning multiplication, we multiply to get our score.♥



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December 2019



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#### Spot the object

Finding hidden pictures is not only fun—it also improves your youngster's attention to detail. Try a book from a series like *Where's Waldo?* (Martin Handford) or *I Spy* (Jean Marzollo). Or search the internet for "hidden pictures." She can print out the pages or play online.

#### Tell the truth

Show your child that being truthful matters—even in situations where no one would know the difference. For example, if you leave a store without noticing an item under your cart, let him see you return to pay for it. Explain that being honest is the right thing to do and it makes you feel good.

#### The best gifts

This holiday season, help your youngster brainstorm presents that don't cost a lot of money. For instance, she might make a book of coupons that family members can redeem ("Good for one dog wash"). Or the two of you could bake muffins for teachers and neighbors.

#### Worth quoting

"Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers." *Kahlil Gibran*

### JUST FOR FUN



**Q:** Why did the walrus stand on the marshmallow?

**A:** So she wouldn't fall into the hot cocoa!

## We're a family of readers

When families share a love of reading, children develop stronger literacy skills and are more motivated to pick up a book. Here's how some of our readers have made reading a family affair.



#### After-dinner novel

"We pick a novel all ages can enjoy—often one my wife or I enjoyed as a child—and take turns reading a chapter a night. The kids look forward to it, especially if we stopped at a cliff-hanger the day before. After each chapter, we share our opinions of the book and say what we think will happen tomorrow."

#### Reading adventures

"Every time we visit the library, we look for books related to someplace we're going soon. Before a visit to the aquarium, we found nonfiction books about sharks and dolphins. And before a trip to my sister's apartment in the city, we read about skyscrapers, subways, and taxis."

#### Treasure hunts

"When my son first learned to read, he searched for free reading 'treasure.' He'd collect maps from parks and malls, brochures from the vet's office, and even fortunes from cookies. Soon, our whole family was adding to the 'treasure chest.' We've learned a lot, like how dogs communicate and what fun things there are to do at our favorite park." ♥

## Clearing out clutter

Try these ideas for decluttering during winter break, and your youngster will start the New Year with organized spaces to work and play:

- Have your child sort through her backpack and study area. She could file old tests and quizzes, save favorite papers and projects, and discard anything she won't need when school starts again.
- Let your youngster start a donation box in her closet for outgrown clothes and toys. Once the box is full, decide together where to donate it—she'll discover the satisfaction that comes from helping others.
- Suggest that your child label separate containers for smaller items like erasers and sticky notes. Putting them into the correct bins gives her practice with sorting and makes school supplies easy to find at homework time. ♥

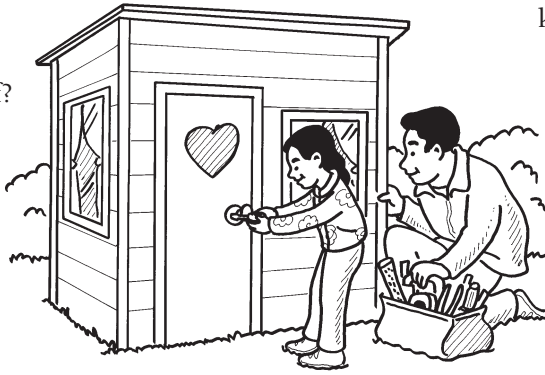


# I can handle that!

What is your child capable of doing for herself? Probably more than she realizes. Encourage her to become more responsible with these tips.

**Manage a social life.** Let your youngster call friends to set up her own get-togethers. She can also RSVP to birthday parties and pick out and wrap gifts. If she's sleeping over at a friend or relative's house, ask her to pack her own overnight bag herself.

**Do minor repairs.** Teach your child how to use a screwdriver and other tools safely. You can watch as she puts her



know-how to work fixing a younger sibling's toy or tightening a loose doorknob.

**Track "inventory."** Is your youngster running low on crayons, shampoo, or her favorite cereal? Have her keep a list on the refrigerator.

**Cook food.** Your child can learn to make sandwiches and salads, mash potatoes, and whisk eggs. With supervision, she could peel and chop vegetables and use the microwave. *Idea:* Encourage her to be creative in the kitchen and come up with her own recipes.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Connect with history

Become history "tourists" in your own town. These activities help your child learn about history and make connections to what he's learning in school.

#### Exhibits

Visit historic sites and museums. Your youngster may learn how people made hand-dipped candles or crafted armor. Encourage him to ask staffers questions about the time period. He might inquire about chores children did, for instance.



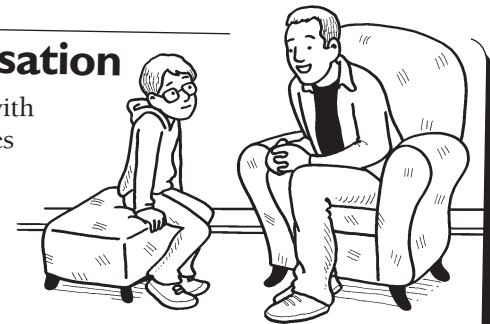
#### Historical markers

These plaques tell what happened in specific locations. Perhaps a one-room schoolhouse once stood in your town or a famous inventor was born nearby. Stop to read and discuss the markers. *Tip:* Search for markers near you at [hmdb.org](http://hmdb.org).♥



### Drugs: Start a conversation

It's never too early to discuss drugs with your youngster. In fact, opening the lines of communication now will pave the way for more serious conversations as he gets older. Consider this advice.



- **Begin with questions.** Find out what your child knows about drugs. What has he learned in health class or heard from other kids? Using his knowledge as a starting point will lead to a more meaningful discussion and allow you to correct misconceptions.
- **Discuss safety rules.** When you take medication or give any to your youngster, read the instructions together. Explain that taking more than directed is dangerous and that he's not allowed to take medicine without your permission. *Note:* Be sure to keep your medicine cabinet locked.♥

### Motivated from within

**Q:** My daughter told me that her friends "all" get rewards for good grades and she wants to get rewards, too. How should I handle this?

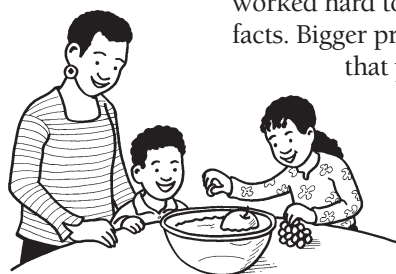
**A:** Help your child see that doing well is a reward in itself. That way, she won't get in the habit of depending on rewards like money or stickers.

First, encourage her to focus on the excitement of learning rather than just on her grades. Say she aced a science test. Of course you're proud of her and you'll let her know it. But also

ask her to explain a concept or show you an experiment or activity she did in class. ("You answered that an apple floats but a grape sinks—I'd like to see that!")

Also, help her see how her effort leads to natural rewards. If she brings home a good math grade on her report card, you could say, "Great job. I know you worked hard to learn multiplication facts. Bigger problems will be easier now that you've memorized those."

Over time, she'll realize how rewarding it is to learn new things, work hard, and succeed—without rewards from anyone else.♥



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