

The Road to School Success



Your child's school career is a journey that will take her from ABCs and 123s to complex novels and challenging math problems. Here are helpful ways to fuel her journey with focus, organization, motivation, and curiosity.

Focus

Like a driver or a pedestrian, a good student must pay attention. Consider this advice for helping your youngster concentrate, whether she's in class or studying at home.

Play "attention games"

Enjoy games that train your child's brain to focus, such as Simon Says, Mother May I?, and Red Light, Green Light.



Another game she may like that requires close attention is Cup Swap. Place three cups upside down in a row. While your youngster watches carefully, put a coin or token under one cup, and quickly move

the cups around so they swap places repeatedly. When you stop, can she tell you which cup has the coin beneath it? Now let her do a cup swap for you!

Practice healthy habits

Help your child develop habits that boost concentration. A good night's sleep (9–11 hours) and a nutritious breakfast get him ready to focus in school because he won't be distracted by

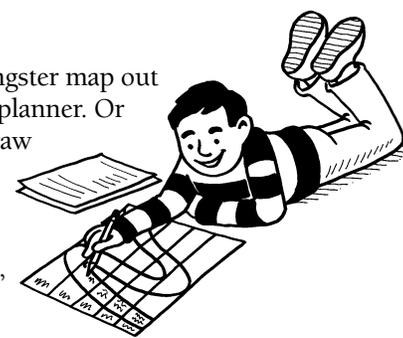
fatigue or a growling stomach. Before he does homework, he could eat a healthy snack (string cheese and whole-grain crackers or carrot sticks and hummus, for example) and "get the wiggles out" by dancing to music or taking a walk with you. Finally, make sure your youngster works in a distraction-free zone—away from noisy siblings and with electronics turned off.

Organization

A journey that is well planned is more likely to be successful. Try these ideas to help your child manage his time and materials.

Create a "road map"

Suggest that your youngster map out his week using a student planner. Or try this idea: Have him draw a path on construction paper that begins at one corner and winds to the opposite corner. Next, he should add lines to divide the sheet into five columns and label each with a weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday). He could write homework assignments and other obligations in each space. *Examples:* "Study spelling words." "Make diorama for social studies." Every day after school, review his planner or his map together, and talk about when he'll do each task. He can check off each item as he completes it or color in that day's spaces on his road map.



Manage papers and supplies

Encourage your child to keep her backpack and her homework area organized. By carrying only what she needs in her bag, she’s less likely to lose important papers. Suggest that she clean it out every Friday after school, discarding scrap paper, hanging up artwork, and filing old quizzes. Also, have her keep homework supplies in one spot so she’s not sidetracked by searching for something like a ruler or colored pencils. *Idea:* Let her fill a basket or box with paper, pencils, a calculator, erasers, and other supplies. She could store her “homework tote” on her desk or carry it to the kitchen table when she does homework.

Motivation

The best motivation is *self*-motivation. Your youngster can keep chugging along during his journey through school with these suggestions.

Make decisions

Children tend to be more motivated if they feel like they have a say in what they do or when they do it. Try to give your youngster choices about when to work or what to read at bedtime. You could ask, “Which subject will you study first, science or history?” or “Which book should we read tonight?” If he gets to pick the topic for a report

or project, encourage him to choose one that he will find motivating, perhaps something related to a hobby or a sport he loves. Point out that he can even make choices when he takes a test—perhaps which questions to answer first or how to approach a math problem.

Work hard

Focusing on your child’s efforts rather than on her intelligence or grades shows that she is in the “driver’s seat” and in control of her performance. Maybe she studies hard and does well on a geography test. You might say, “Quizzing yourself a little each day really helped you learn the material!” You’ll tell her exactly what she did that led to success—and inspire her to repeat the behavior next time.



Curiosity

Sparking your youngster’s curiosity puts her on the road to lifelong learning. Consider these tips for inspiring a sense of wonder.



Share discoveries

Create a “Curiosity Zone” to show your child that you can be curious and learn at any age. Hang up a bulletin board or blank poster board, and place index cards, pushpins, and a pencil nearby. Encourage family members to post interesting facts they discover, such as “Lightning is hotter than the sun” or “It’s impossible to divide zero by zero.” Your youngster will be excited to add new facts and to stop by the zone to see what others added. Also, post questions. If someone knows the answer, she can write it on the card. Otherwise, suggest that your child research the topic online, in books, or by asking someone who might know the answer.

Explore further

Look for ways to build on what your youngster is studying in school. Visit a history museum when he studies Colonial times. Check out library books on science topics he’s exploring like plants or magnets. If he learns about landmarks around the world, suggest that he draw pictures of them or use blocks to build models. He’ll add to his background knowledge—and see that chances to learn are all around!



Home & School CONNECTION®

Operation Respect



Your child's mission: to be respectful. Why? It makes the world a better place for others—and for him. How can he accomplish this important mission? The ideas in this guide will help.

Start a campaign

What is respect? Filming a commercial is a fun way to help your youngster understand what respect looks like and sounds like. Suggest that he record friends or family members acting out scenarios that demonstrate respect. For instance, he might record one person turning off the TV while another is doing homework. In a voice-over, he can explain that being quiet is respectful of someone who is concentrating on an important task. When his commercial is finished, let him hold a screening for your family.

What I respect about you

Who deserves your child's respect? Everyone. Take turns naming specific reasons you respect family members, friends, adults at school, coworkers, or people in your community. For example, maybe your youngster respects her grandfather for serving in the military or the school cafeteria workers for serving healthy foods. When it's your turn, try to pick a variety of people—from your company's CEO to the custodian who cleans your building. You'll teach your child that a person doesn't have to be in charge or well known to be worthy of respect.



Treat siblings well

Help your youngsters develop mutual respect by encouraging them to share special parts of their lives. Attending his older sister's talent show will help your younger child have respect for his sister's hard work. Also, doing activities together lets them enjoy each other's company, which can strengthen their relationship and motivate them to treat each other more respectfully. Suggest that your children cooperate in activities they both like, such as making up dances or volunteering at an animal shelter.



Respect others' time

Encourage your child to recognize that everyone's time is valuable. Talk about why it's disrespectful to be late. You can explain that walking into class after the bell rings distracts everyone and wastes learning (and teaching) time. And your child may say that being on time for sports practices and games is respectful toward her teammates and coach, who might not be able to start without the full team. With your youngster, create a plan for being on time. For instance, she could lay out her uniform the night before so she's not searching for her jersey when it's time to leave.

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Lead by example

Treating your child with respect helps her understand how good it feels to be respected. For example, knock on her door before entering her room to respect her privacy. Also, let her have a say in family decisions when possible, perhaps about what to do next weekend, to let her see that you respect her opinion. Finally, try not to discipline your youngster in front of others. If she misbehaves at a relative's home or in the grocery store, you could quietly walk outside with her or wait until you're in the car to talk to her about it.

Show respect for nature

A walk outdoors is the perfect time to talk about ways to respect the natural world. For instance, if your child wants to pick flowers, you might say, "They're pretty, but we need to leave them there so they can live and others can appreciate them."



At home, put him in charge of sorting recycled items. Point out that putting fewer items in the trash helps to keep the world cleaner and to conserve natural resources that everyone needs.

Use electronics thoughtfully

Set guidelines for screen use that show respect for others. You might have a no-screen policy at the dinner table or talk to each other in the car rather than letting your youngster play a video game. Explain that it's respectful to pay attention to the people you're with rather than to your screen. Also, discuss ways to communicate respectfully when your child is on a device. *Examples:* Don't type in all capital letters, since that's like shouting. Consider your audience—for instance, avoid acronyms like BRB ("Be right back") or IKR ("I know, right?") with her grandparents who might not know them.

Respect property

Take turns naming objects that people share, such as a library book, a family computer, or classroom supplies. Together, think of ways to demonstrate respect for the property and for those who use it. For example, returning library books on time shows respect for others who want to read them, too. And putting caps on markers and glue sticks is respectful of the teacher or school that purchased them and of classmates who need to use them.



Value diversity

Children are naturally curious about differences, and understanding them can help your youngster respect people who look, speak, or act differently than he does. Read books with characters from a variety of backgrounds to raise his awareness. When you're out, if he notices someone speaking with an unfamiliar accent, use it as a teaching moment. Instead of thinking the person "talks funny," he could realize this means the person speaks more than one language—and you have to be pretty smart to do that! That can lead him to think about the knowledge that people of different backgrounds have and how we can share with and learn from each other.

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