

Elementary School Parents[®]

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Kern County Supt. of Schools Office
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make the difference!



Ensure your child continues to learn over the school holiday

Your child looks at the calendar and imagines the joy of having no schedule for the whole winter school holiday. You look at the same blank squares on your calendar and have a mild moment of panic.

However, the winter break can give you a chance to spend a little extra time with your child. Here are some activities that will keep her learning—and that will keep you from hearing, “I’m bored” during the holiday:

- **Assemble a list** from your local newspaper of places to go and things to do. Every community has places that will interest kids. Check out a local museum (see if they have a day when admission is free). Look for free concerts you can attend. See if the local public library has any special story hours or performances.
- **Get outside.** Be sure you schedule time every day to be outdoors. Walk, bike, skate, ski—but get outside!
- **Look for a video** based on a children’s book. Read the book first, then watch the video. Discuss how the two were alike, and what differences you saw.
- **Prepare food together.** Nearly every culture has some special foods associated with the holiday season. With your child, prepare foods you remember from your childhood. Share your memories. Or do some research and prepare a dish you’ve never tried.
- **Volunteer.** Set aside time for a family volunteer activity. Feed animals at the animal shelter. Make sandwiches for people living on the street. Your child will learn the best gift is the gift of service.

Use science to encourage good hygiene!



Here’s a fun science project that will show your child how the fluoride in toothpaste protects

his teeth. You will need two jars, two raw eggs and two cups of white vinegar.

Label one jar *plain egg* and the other *toothpaste egg*. Weigh and measure both eggs, then smear one with a layer of toothpaste. Fill the jars with vinegar and drop one egg into each jar. Cover the jars with plastic wrap. Have your child observe the eggs for four days.

Bubbles will form around the *plain egg* for the first 15 minutes. (That’s the acid of the vinegar working.) By the next day, the eggshell will be gritty, and the egg will be bigger. After three days, the shell will be completely gone, and the egg will be soft and rubbery.

Meanwhile, the *toothpaste egg* will show little change, due to the protection provided by the toothpaste.

Because teeth and eggshells are both made of calcium, this experiment is a great way to help your child see why he needs to brush his teeth!

Follow five research-based tips for more successful discipline



Helping children learn appropriate behavior is a parenting task that sometimes seems overwhelming. But research

shows there are five ways parents can be most successful in shaping children's positive behavior:

- 1. Give your child positive attention.** Set aside time every day when you can give your child some individual attention. Read a book, play a board game or work together on a household project. The important thing is that the two of you are together, talking and listening to each other.
- 2. Listen to your child.** Give him words to express his feelings. Kids who can say, "I'm angry" are less likely to hit.
- 3. Give choices whenever you can.** Kids learn how to make good choices by making lots of choices. Let your child make choices—and then live with the results.

- 4. Notice when your child does something right.** This doesn't mean praising your child every time he takes a breath! But when he does something positive, let him know you noticed. He'll be more likely to do it again tomorrow.
- 5. Be a good role model.** You can't expect your child to control his temper if you scream at every car on the road. Your example is the single most powerful way that you teach your child about appropriate behavior.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, "Guidance for Effective Discipline," *Pediatrics* (American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org).

"Where parents do too much for their children, the children will not do much for themselves."

—Elbert Hubbard

Expose your elementary schooler to other countries & cultures

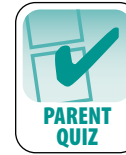


Children often know very little about other countries. Here are some ways you can expose your child to

other cultures:

- **Learn about holiday customs** of people around the world. Use the library to discover how other people celebrate their own special days.
- **Look for plays, movies or puppet shows** about people from other countries. Many libraries and museums present these programs for free.
- **Compare coins and stamps** from other countries. They often include information about the country. You may find stamps from other countries where you work. You can also look on the Internet.
- **Learn simple words** in different languages. Teach your child to count to 10 in another language. Learn simple phrases such as, "Hello," and "Thank you."
- **Look for television programs** about other countries. When you watch the news, keep a globe or an atlas nearby to learn more about the countries in the news.

Are you helping your dawdling child speed it up?



It's time to leave, but your child is not ready. This is the fourth morning this week you've been late.

Some kids just seem to have only one speed—slow. But there are ways parents can help these kids learn to "get a move on."

Are you doing all you can to move your dawdler out the door? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- 1. Does your child go to bed on time, so it's easier to get up in the morning?**
- 2. Do you take time at night to lay out clothes and pack book bags?**
- 3. Does your child know, step by step, what she has to do to get ready in the morning?**
- 4. Do you give your child "two-minute warnings" to ease transitions?**
- 5. Do you build extra time into your schedule?**

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your dawdling child get up to speed. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Make online safety a priority for every member of your family



Kids use computers for homework, fun and socializing, but the convenience has a cost. Families must promote computer and Internet safety.

Thankfully, NetSmartz, an online safety resource, shares lots of tips with parents and kids:

- **Keep the computer** in a central spot, such as in the family room, where you can keep an eye on Internet activities.
- **Consider installing programs** that make computer use safer for kids. Also check your Internet service provider's safety features.
- **Learn about Internet safety.** Then talk with your child about basic rules and post them near the computer. (Find examples at www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledge.htm.)
- **Protect personal information**, such as name and age. Discuss why it shouldn't be shared online.

Never agree to meet online-only "friends" or acquaintances in person.

- **Don't respond** to inappropriate messages. Instead, turn off the monitor and tell a trusted adult. Also notify law enforcement. (Visiting CyberTipline.com can help.)
- **Go online together.** Let your child show you her computer skills and favorite sites. Guide her to child-friendly resources.
- **Keep track** of your child's online activities. With whom does she email or chat? What games does she play? What sites does she use? Supervise closely and keep online accounts in your name.
- **Remember that your child** may go online in other locations, such as at a friend's home. Take steps to ensure safety no matter where she uses the Internet.

Source: "Safety Tips," NetSmartz, www.netsmartz.org/safety/safetytips.htm.

Reinforce writing skills with a fun game of 'collect a sentence'



Do you plan to travel over the school holiday? Here's a fun car game that will sharpen your kids' writing skills. It will also help them become better observers.

Here's how to play:

1. **Set a time limit**—say, one or two minutes.
2. **Let your kids "collect"** all the words they see in the time you have allotted. They can include the names of things they see, like "burger" or "telephone." They can write down descriptions of things they see ("blue" for the sky or

"hot" for the fries). They can also look for actual words on signs.

3. **Begin the challenge.** When the time limit is up, your kids must use the words they have collected to create as many sentences as they can. The sentences can be funny or serious. You might work with younger kids, or divide into teams.
4. **See how many sentences** you can write. Then next time, see if you can beat your own record.

Source: "Collect a Sentence," FamilyEducation.com, <http://fun.familyeducation.com/word-games/travel-games/57461.html>.

Q: My son has real problems writing down his thoughts. It seems to take him much longer than other students to write words on a page. He also has trouble spelling. Now that he's in fifth grade, he is assigned a lot more writing. How can I help him?

Questions & Answers

A: Writing is not something that comes naturally to all children. And some, like your son, seem to face special challenges.

Still, as you correctly point out, writing is essential to success in school. You do need to meet with your child's teacher to discuss your concerns. Ask her how you both can work on this issue.

There are some things you can do to help your son when he has a writing assignment to do at home. To get started:

- **Emphasize the importance** of planning. Before your son ever picks up a pencil, he should think carefully about what he wants to write. He can brainstorm and jot down a few ideas—or make a recording of what he wants to say.
- **Let your child use a computer.** Teach him to type (there are plenty of programs that will help). He will be able to write more quickly, so he'll be less frustrated. He'll need to use a computer in middle and high school anyway—you can help him get a head start.
- **Help your child practice** his handwriting at home. He'll always need to write some things by hand. Writing is a skill, and just like other skills, it gets better with practice.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Building Character

Help your child persevere by setting goals



Facing life's challenges—from learning to ride a bike to finishing a big project—requires perseverance, and kids need plenty of help developing this trait.

To boost your child's persistence:

- **Build on the past.** Remind your child of times she's succeeded through hard work. Discuss how great she felt and how she can do it again.
- **Set a small goal.** Choose something your child can accomplish and enjoy, such as walking a mile with you. This builds confidence.
- **Ask for input.** What else would your child like to achieve? Wanting to reach the goal will give her motivation.
- **Be honest.** Make sure your child picks a realistic goal, but explain that reaching it won't be easy. Good planning will help a lot.
- **Make a plan.** Write down specific steps and deadlines. Help your child divide her goal into small, manageable parts.
- **Be a cheerleader.** Compliment progress, both along the way and at the finish line. Do not use prizes or punishments.
- **Learn from the experience.** Even if your child doesn't meet her objective, stay positive! Take pride in her hard work. Talk about what she might do differently next time, and envision success.

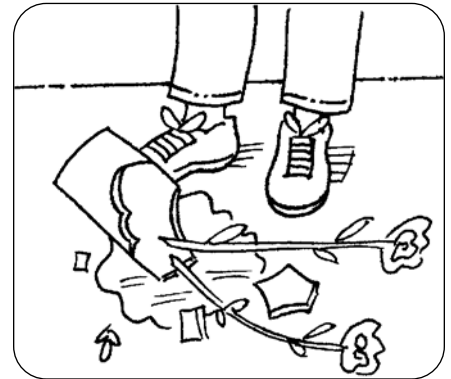
Source: Marie Faust Evitt, "How to Teach Kids Perseverance and Goal-Setting," Parents.com, www.parents.com/family-life/better-parenting/parenting-style/how-to-teach-kids-perseverance-goal-setting/?page=1.

Encourage your child to be honest in difficult situations

Research shows that by the time kids reach elementary school, most know the difference between honesty and lying. But that doesn't make truth-telling easy!

To encourage honesty in your child:

- **Be a role model.** Children are good "lie detectors." They notice when parents tell the truth—and when they don't.
- **Reward trustworthiness.** If your child is truthful in a difficult situation, compliment him!
- **React calmly.** When your child lies, don't label him a "liar." Express confidence that he will make better choices in the future.
- **Discuss honesty.** Why is it important to be honest? Note examples of honesty and dishonesty—and their effects.



- **Create opportunities** for telling the truth. Say, "You broke my vase," instead of, "Did you do this?" It's better to say what happened rather than to ask unnecessary questions.

Source: Karen Stephens, "Lying, Fibs, and Tall-Tales: Teaching Children To Be Truthful," mysmallwonders.com/resources/pdf/LYING01 PELibrary.pdf.

Teach your elementary schooler to express anger with respect



It's hard to be angry and respectful at the same time. But expressing anger with respect is essential. You and your child can control your reactions if you:

- **List triggers.** Think about what makes you most angry. Being disobeyed? Being told what to do? Commit to reacting calmly to these situations.
- **Identify "red flags."** Start by noticing what anger is like for you. Does it make you hot? Make you want to scream? These are important warning signs.

- **Think.** When you feel angry, ask yourself, "What made me angry?" "What else did I feel?" Anger can sometimes really be disappointment or embarrassment.
- **Leave the source.** If possible, walk away from what is frustrating you and try to calm down.
- **Make good choices.** There are many respectful ways to release anger. Write in a journal, paint a picture or exercise. When you're angry with a person, wait until you're calm to talk.

Source: Elizabeth Verdick and Marjorie Lisovskis, *How to Take the Grrrr Out of Anger*, ISBN: 1-57542-117-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, www.freespirit.com).