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Homework: Set the stage

SHORT NOTES

Focused on learning

Does your youngster know that sitting up straight and watching the teacher helps him stay focused? This position signals his brain to be alert so he can pay attention to lessons and instructions. *Tip:* To avoid distractions, he might pretend there's a tunnel directly between him and his teacher.

Respect for all teachers

Tell your child to treat substitute teachers the way she would treat guests in your home. She should be respectful and provide help if the substitute asks for it. Explain that it's also important for your youngster to follow classroom rules and routines—just as she would if her regular teacher were there.

Time to play

No matter what grade your child is in, he's not too old to play! He'll stretch his imagination and relieve stress. Try pulling out toys he hasn't used in a while, like building blocks or toy trains. Having them in plain sight may inspire him to play with them again. Or walk to a playground after dinner—and invite the entire family to swing, slide, and climb.

Worth quoting

"Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind." *Henry James*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What never asks questions but gets a lot of answers?

A: A phone.



Homework is your child's job, but you play an important role, too. Here are everyday things you can do to set her up for success.

Show interest

Before your youngster starts homework, ask her to tell you about her assignments. She could show you her textbooks or worksheets and explain what she is supposed to do. ("I have to finish the even-numbered math problems on this page and answer questions about this poem.") This shows her that homework is important to you.

Create a schedule

Encourage your child to list the subjects she has for homework every day, and help her estimate how long each will take. ("Math: 35 minutes. Writing: 20 minutes.") Keep in mind that some kids prefer to do easier assignments first so they can quickly accomplish something,

while others would rather start with harder work. Have your youngster decide which method suits her best.

Offer support

There are lots of ways to support your child while she works. Let her bounce ideas off of you for a project, or listen as she reads her essay out loud. If she gets stuck, ask questions to guide her rather than giving her the answers. Or suggest strategies like looking at a previous textbook chapter, consulting her notes, or calling a friend. She'll see that she can rely on herself to find solutions. ♥



After-school recap

"What did you do in school today?" If your youngster usually answers, "Nothing," you're not alone. Try these alternatives to get insight into what he's learning:

- Let your child pretend he's a newscaster reporting on the day's events. He could decorate a paper towel tube as a "microphone" for delivering his newscast. ("Alex's class had a guest speaker this morning! She talked about her job as a computer programmer.")

- Before dinner, have each family member write something he learned that day on a slip of paper and put it in a shoebox labeled "Guess what I learned today?" *Example:* "Jupiter has 63 moons." Pass the box around as you eat, and take turns pulling out a slip and reading it. The person who wrote it can answer everyone's questions. ♥

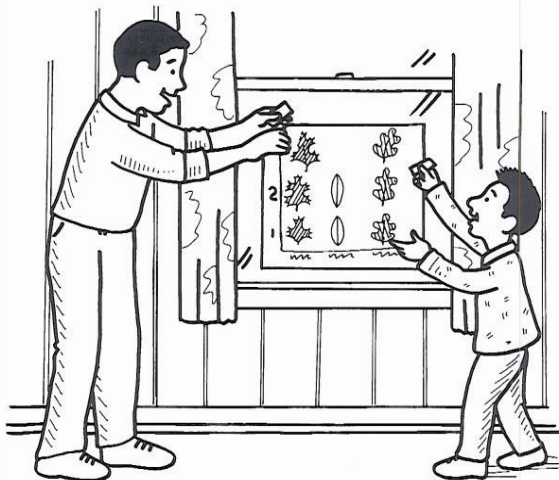


Learning with leaves

Fall leaves aren't just fun and colorful—they're ideal for practicing all sorts of skills. Help your youngster collect leaves from the ground, and enjoy these activities together.

Leaf prints. Have your child dip each leaf into finger paint and firmly press it onto a sheet of white paper. He'll see the imprints of the veins—ask what he thinks the veins are for. (They deliver water to the leaves.)

Graph of leaves. Encourage your youngster to sort his leaves into columns, lining them up evenly across each row. If he sorted by color, you



could ask, "How many more red leaves are there than yellow leaves?" or "Which color did you gather the most of?"

The story of my leaf. Suggest that your child pick his favorite leaf and write a story starring it as the main character. Perhaps he

will write about the leaf changing color or being carried to the ocean by the wind.♥



Q & A Finish what you start

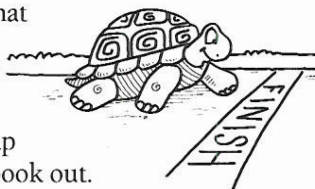
Q: My daughter often signs up for activities and then wants to try something different. Recently, she asked if she could quit the school yearbook to join the art club. What should I do?

A: It's okay to try different activities, but sticking with commitments teaches your child to show grit, or perseverance and mental toughness.

Explain that the yearbook staff is counting on her to help get the yearbook out.

Find out why she doesn't want to continue. Is her job too hard? Does she want to join the art club because her friends are members? Then, brainstorm solutions. Perhaps your child could switch to a different role on the staff or get to know another member better by inviting her over after school.

Point out that she'll feel proud of herself for doing her best and meeting her obligations. And the perseverance that it takes to finish out the semester or year will serve her well in the future.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Action-packed spelling

Be active and practice spelling?

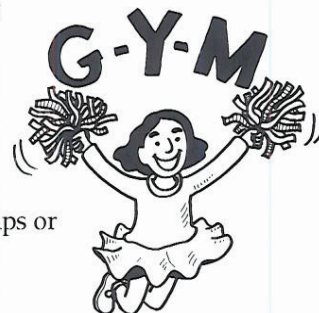
Yes! Encourage your youngster to grab her spelling list and use these ideas to study.

Cheerleading

Give me a G! Give me a Y! Give me an M! What does it spell? Gym! Suggest that your child spell her words like a cheerleader. She could do cheerleading jumps or other moves as she calls out the letters.

Basketball

Head to a basketball court for this twist on Around the World. Take turns choosing a word to spell (say, *piece*). Then, stand in a different spot and say a letter of the word for each shot. Get one point for each basket you make—and double your score if you spell the word correctly. When all the words on the list have been spelled, the player with the most points wins.♥



Communication counts

Build a strong relationship with your child's teacher by communicating regularly. Here are tips:

- Ask the teacher about the best way to contact her. Does she prefer email, notes in your youngster's backpack, or phone calls?

- Sign and return items as soon as possible. Your signature on a graded test or reading log



communicates to the teacher that you're interested in how your child is doing.

- Your youngster's life at home can have a big impact on his life in school. Talk to the teacher right away about changes like a new custody arrangement or a parent's military deployment. That way, you and the teacher will both be able to keep an eye out for any changes in his grades or behavior.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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