Talk with your child to prepare for school and ensure success

What is one of the best no-cost strategies for helping your child succeed in school? Here’s a clue: You need yourself, your child and your voice. It’s talking to your child!

Extensive research has confirmed that children whose parents speak to them often and from an early age are more prepared for school. They have strong vocabularies because they have been exposed to so much spoken language. This prepares them to read and write.

Make it a goal to increase the time you spend talking to your child. Here are some ways to do it:

- **Name everything for your child.** Many things are new to a young child. She may know the word *flower*, but does she know *chrysanthemum*, *pansy* and *geranium*? Tell your child the name of everything you see together.

- **Ask your child specific questions.** Go beyond, “How was your day?” A child will often say, “Fine” or “Good” and the conversation is over. Ask instead about specific things: “What games did you play on the playground?” Then tell her about your day, too.

- **Include your child on errands.** Each time you take her places, you will find things your child doesn’t know about. Every place presents a chance to talk with your child.


Emphasize respecting authority figures

In order to succeed in school and throughout life, your child will need to learn to listen to people in charge. At school, this includes teachers, bus drivers and custodians.

Work with your child to:
- **Follow** procedures given.
- **Listen** when adults are talking.
- **Use** good manners.


Screen time guidelines set the stage for the year

The start of the school year is a good time to review TV viewing rules set by the American Academy of Pediatrics. One to two hours per day is the limit suggested for kids two and older. Here are additional guidelines to consider:

- **Avoid nighttime viewing.** Read stories and have quiet conversations to keep evenings calm.
- **Look for educational programs.** Research links educational shows to verbal, math and school readiness skills. Watch together and discuss what you see.
- **Limit exposure to commercials.** Record shows (and skip the ads). Borrow DVDs from the library.

Make social skills a learning priority

Research shows that the most critical skills for students to learn at the beginning of the school year are social skills. Getting along with teachers and classmates makes it possible to focus on other subjects.

You can help by boosting your child’s:

- **Self-confidence.** Help him take pride in himself and how he interacts with others. Say things like, “You shared your crayons with Max. That’s nice! See how happy he is!”

- **Cooperation.** Social activities with parents or friends are opportunities for sharing, taking turns and getting along with others.

- **Communication skills.** Talk with your child often. Let him practice expressing his thoughts and feelings. Show that you’re listening and interested.

  Talk with the teacher, too. Ask what social skills she emphasizes and how you can reinforce them at home.

Make time together daily

The beginning of school always comes with a to-do list. But spending time with your child should still be at the top of that list. Together you can:

- **Work** on a puzzle.
- **Take** a walk and collect leaves.
- **Bake** cookies.
- **Read** favorite stories.
How can I help my child cope with anxiety about school?

Q: My child will be starting kindergarten in a few days, and he has suddenly become anxious. We went to buy a backpack yesterday and he started sobbing. He has told me repeatedly that he doesn’t want to go. He was so excited and happy about it this past summer. What could be going on, and how can I help him?

A: The prospect of kindergarten was very distant for your child over the summer. Now that it’s here, however, it is real—and unknown. The good news is that this anxiety will be temporary. Here’s how you can help:

• **Remove the drama.** Beginning kindergarten is a big deal, but emphasizing it can add to your child’s anxiety. Instead, remind him of other places he has made friends and had fun learning. Tell him kindergarten will be similar in many ways.

• **Encourage him to talk.** If your child can tell you what is bothering him, such as not being able to find the bathroom, you may be able to ease his mind with an explanation.

• **Share your concerns with the teacher.** Kindergarten teachers are well versed in helping children adjust to kindergarten. Ask what you can do at home to reinforce what your child does at school.

Do your discipline techniques work?

Discipline is one of parents’ toughest—and most critical—jobs. But enforcing correct behavior will set your child up to achieve in school and in life. Answer yes or no to the following questions to see if you’re using proven methods:

1. **Do you simplify** discipline by stating a few brief rules, such as, “Keep your hands and feet to yourself”?

2. **Do you enforce** the most important rules, refusing to bend even if your child throws a tantrum?

3. **Do you encourage** your child with affection and specific compliments when she behaves well?

4. **Do you stay** calm when your child misbehaves and model how to manage difficult emotions?

5. **Do you ensure** that good behavior gets much more attention than poor behavior?

**How well are you doing?**

Each yes means you’re working hard to discipline with success. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

---

Routines have big benefits

Developing everyday routines contributes to school success. Children benefit from routines:

• **At night.** Have regular dinnertime and bedtime routines.

• **In the morning.** Wake your child with enough time for a nutritious breakfast.

• **After school.** Plan a snack and exercise right after school.

Encourage your child on the road to reading

Your young child is not expected to know how to read yet, but he’s right on track if he:

• **Likes** books.

• **Understands** that words in a book tell a story.

• **Recognizes** familiar words, such as his name and the word stop.

• **Enjoys** listening to rhymes.


Show your child the purpose of numbers

Before your child does her first arithmetic problem, she should learn that numbers represent real things. Here are some ways to reinforce her number sense:

• **Show** that numbers are everywhere—on houses, packages, buses.

• **Explain** why numbers are there. “This number tells us how heavy the bag of sugar is.”

• **Talk** about the concept of how many. “We have four kittens.”


---

“You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.” - Franklin P. Jones

---

**Helping Children Learn®**

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Stacey Marin.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.


Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2013, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005

---

Q&A

How can I help my child cope with anxiety about school?

Q: My child will be starting kindergarten in a few days, and he has suddenly become anxious. We went to buy a backpack yesterday and he started sobbing. He has told me repeatedly that he doesn’t want to go. He was so excited and happy about it this past summer. What could be going on, and how can I help him?

A: The prospect of kindergarten was very distant for your child over the summer. Now that it’s here, however, it is real—and unknown. The good news is that this anxiety will be temporary. Here’s how you can help:

• **Remove the drama.** Beginning kindergarten is a big deal, but emphasizing it can add to your child’s anxiety. Instead, remind him of other places he has made friends and had fun learning. Tell him kindergarten will be similar in many ways.

• **Encourage him to talk.** If your child can tell you what is bothering him, such as not being able to find the bathroom, you may be able to ease his mind with an explanation.

• **Share your concerns with the teacher.** Kindergarten teachers are well versed in helping children adjust to kindergarten. Ask what you can do at home to reinforce what your child does at school.

Do your discipline techniques work?

Discipline is one of parents’ toughest—and most critical—jobs. But enforcing correct behavior will set your child up to achieve in school and in life. Answer yes or no to the following questions to see if you’re using proven methods:

1. **Do you simplify** discipline by stating a few brief rules, such as, “Keep your hands and feet to yourself”?

2. **Do you enforce** the most important rules, refusing to bend even if your child throws a tantrum?

3. **Do you encourage** your child with affection and specific compliments when she behaves well?

4. **Do you stay** calm when your child misbehaves and model how to manage difficult emotions?

5. **Do you ensure** that good behavior gets much more attention than poor behavior?

**How well are you doing?**

Each yes means you’re working hard to discipline with success. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

---

Routines have big benefits

Developing everyday routines contributes to school success. Children benefit from routines:

• **At night.** Have regular dinnertime and bedtime routines.

• **In the morning.** Wake your child with enough time for a nutritious breakfast.

• **After school.** Plan a snack and exercise right after school.

Encourage your child on the road to reading

Your young child is not expected to know how to read yet, but he’s right on track if he:

• **Likes** books.

• **Understands** that words in a book tell a story.

• **Recognizes** familiar words, such as his name and the word stop.

• **Enjoys** listening to rhymes.


Show your child the purpose of numbers

Before your child does her first arithmetic problem, she should learn that numbers represent real things. Here are some ways to reinforce her number sense:

• **Show** that numbers are everywhere—on houses, packages, buses.

• **Explain** why numbers are there. “This number tells us how heavy the bag of sugar is.”

• **Talk** about the concept of how many. “We have four kittens.”


---

“You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.” - Franklin P. Jones

---

**Helping Children Learn®**

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Stacey Marin.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.


Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2013, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005