ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

November 2026

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Prince William County Schools

Let your child see you reading often for all kinds of reasons

Your child is always watching and learning from you—even when it doesn't seem like it. So when you demonstrate the many reasons reading is useful in your life, your child learns it is a skill worth having.



To help your elementary schooler develop the reading habit, read often yourself and discuss why you are doing it. Show that reading helps you:

- **Relax and have a good time.** Say that reading is entertaining, and not just something for school or work.
- **Figure things out.** Explain that you are reading a manual to find out how to program the new coffee maker, or a weather report to decide what to wear. Show your child how you read a recipe to make sure you have the ingredients you need before you start cooking.
- **Learn new things.** Say, "I'm trying to learn more about AI because we want to use it at work. This article explains how other businesses use it."
- **Take boredom out of waiting.** Bring something to read everywhere you go. Ignore TV screens in waiting rooms and pull out your reading. Play audiobooks on long car trips.
- **Enrich conversations** and relationships. When you read something interesting, read a tidbit aloud. Share an article your child might like.

Address behavior with three Ps

When it comes to behavior problems, many families wait until *after* their child misbehaves to take action. But preventing problem behavior in the first place is much more effective. Here is a three-step system for doing it:

1. **Predict.** Think about a behavior you would like to change. Perhaps your child usually takes so long to get out of bed and get ready that mornings are hectic. Is your child tired in the morning from staying up too late at night? An earlier bedtime could change that. Is your child taking too much time trying to get organized for school? Packing up the night before is the answer.
2. **Prepare.** Since you can predict the behavior, you can also think of ways to prevent it. Instead of waiting until your child dawdles down to breakfast, brainstorm about ways to avoid the late start.
3. **Practice.** Help your child practice the prevention strategies until they are routine. Then, offer praise for getting ready on time!

Don't hesitate—engage!

Each child is unique. But *all* families can participate in their children's education in beneficial ways. Dive in and engage:

- **At home.** Talk with your child every day about school. Encourage daily reading. Try new things together.
- **At school.** Attend events for families. Ask teachers how you can support your child's learning. If needed, ask for an interpreter or translated documents.
- **In the community.** Meet other families. Share ideas for helping the school meet needs.

Make it easy to recall rules

Creating catchy phrases that link rules with their consequences can help your child remember them. For example:

- **Leave it out and you go without.** Belongings not put away properly go into time-out for a week.
- **Play nice or think twice.** Fighting siblings will have to take a time out to think about their actions.

Help your child step up

How should you respond when grades are disappointing? Stay calm, and set your child up to make improvements. Here's how:

1. **Ask questions** about grades, such as: *Do you think they reflect your work? Do you understand the lessons? What could you do differently?*
2. **Consult the teacher.** Is your child having issues in class? What resources are available for help?
3. **Offer support.** Suggest ways to find help or look for answers instead of giving up.



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Q&A How do I stop a weight issue from being a school issue?

Q: My child is quite overweight. We are working with a doctor, and are improving our diet at home. But my child has almost no friends at school and doesn't want to go. What can I do?



A: More than one-third of children in the U.S. are overweight. And unfortunately, many have problems in school. Studies show that weight-based bullying is more common than other types of bullying. Many children don't speak up in class because they fear being made fun of. They are also more likely to spend time by themselves in less active pursuits.

To help turn things around for your child:

- **Affirm all the positive reasons** your child is a person of value.
- **Tell the teacher** what your child is going through. The teacher can watch for teasing and may have ideas about other ways to help.
- **Emphasize health** rather than a number on the scale. Focus on establishing habits that help your child feel healthy and strong.
- **Follow the doctor's guidelines.** But avoid turning into the "food police" for your child. Make healthy diet changes for the whole family.
- **Make fitness a family priority.** Plan active weekend activities like hiking or kicking a ball around.

Parent Quiz Are you modeling attentive listening?

Listening is an important learning skill. Your child will need to listen to absorb new information and to communicate effectively. Are you teaching your child to listen by example? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you pay** undivided attention when your child is talking to you? If you're busy, do you say when you will be able to listen?
2. **Do you allow** your child time to put thoughts into words and continue to listen patiently?
3. **Do you let** your child finish speaking without interrupting, and ask your child not to interrupt you, either?
4. **Do you restate** what your child says to confirm understanding?
5. **Do you "listen"** to your child's behavior? A child who is acting up is communicating a need.

How well are you doing?

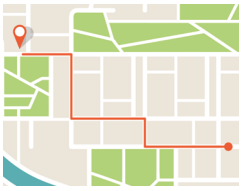
More yes *answers mean you are helping your child sharpen listening skills. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But when you listen, you may learn something new."
—The Dalai Lama

Put geography on the map

Help your child celebrate Geography Awareness Week (November 16-20) with these learning activities:

- **Locate places** in the news on a world map. Together, learn some facts about the locations and the people who live there.
- **Explore local geography.** Help your child find out why your town is located where it is, and what connects it to the rest of the world (roads, rail, rivers, etc.).
- **Make maps.** Have your child map the route from home to school, a store or a friend's house. Then, follow the maps.



Ask questions when math problems get sticky

When your elementary schooler is stuck on a math problem, asking questions can help your child think it through. You can ask:

- *What do the directions say?*
- *What words don't you understand?*
- *What do you already know that can help?*
- *Would it help to draw a diagram?*
- *Can you find an explanation in your book?*

Encourage deeper thinking

Your elementary schooler will be expected to think, evaluate and reason in all grades. To develop these skills, ask your child to:

- **Identify patterns.** What does your child see in that spider web, for example?
- **Evaluate performance.** Ask, "What did you do well? What would you change next time?"
- **Explain reasoning.** Why did your child take a particular action?
- **Look for different ways** to solve a problem.

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