

Helping Children Learn®

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Lemmon Elementary School



March 2023

Teach your child four strategies for achieving learning goals

Setting goals gives students something to work toward, and visualizing them can keep kids motivated when the going gets tough. You have probably helped your child set learning goals. But does your child know what to do after setting a goal to make it easier to reach?

Help your elementary schooler put these four strategies into action:

- 1. Define the goal in writing.** Make sure that your child's goal is specific, and can be accomplished in a short time frame: "I will learn my multiplication facts by the end of the month" rather than "I will do better in math." Post the written goal in a visible place.
- 2. Decide on steps to take.** What work is your child willing to do to achieve the goal? Together, make a step-by-step plan.
- 3. Share the goal and plan with others.** Making goals public builds commitment. Encourage your child to discuss the plan with the teacher.
- 4. Carry out the plan,** one step at a time. If problems crop up, brainstorm possible solutions together. For example, if your child is too tired to review flash cards in the evenings, reviewing over breakfast might work.

As your child works toward the goal, offer encouragement and support. Praise effort and progress. And when your child achieves the goal, celebrate!



Help your elementary schooler go into tests with confidence

Test anxiety is often caused by self-doubt, and it can keep students from achieving the results they are capable of. Poor performance then reinforces that self-doubt. To help your child break the test-anxiety cycle:

- Take the pressure off.** Tell your child that tests simply show the teacher what students have learned so far, and what they need help with. Make it clear that you love your child no matter what—and a test score won't change that.
- Schedule time to review.** Preparation is the best cure for test-anxiety. It's best to study a little each day for several days before the test. Help your child focus first on not-yet-mastered material.
- Teach your child to use positive self-talk,** such as "I have studied and I am prepared to be successful."
- Encourage your child to visualize** doing well. You might say, "Close your eyes and picture yourself knowing the answers."

Play an observation game

Scientists notice and remember details. To encourage this, ask your child to describe the front of a familiar building from memory. How many stories is it? What color is the front door? Together, check the reality against the details your child remembered.

Source: S. Berman, *Thinking Strategies for Science*, Corwin Press.

Stir up interest in exercise

Research shows that regular exercise improves children's health and performance in school. To increase your child's physical activity level:

- Set an example.** Seeing you stay fit can motivate your child.
- Link screens to movement.** Build fitness breaks into your child's screen time.
- Play active games,** such as catch, tag and Simon Says.



Source: A. McPherson and others, "Physical activity, cognition and academic performance," *BMC Public Health*.

Encourage critical thinking

Critical thinking helps students analyze information and understand how it relates to a bigger picture. To help your elementary schooler develop this skill:

- Allow time** for your child to try to solve problems independently. Ask questions like "How could you figure that out?"
- Encourage reflection.** Ask how your child thinks a completed project or task went. "Did you plan enough time to finish? What did you learn from doing it?"
- Consider current events.** Have your child read an article and express an opinion on an issue. Then ask, "Why might other people might think differently?"



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How can I make writing less painful for my child?

Q: My fifth grader hates to write. When there's a writing assignment, my child just stares at the blank piece of paper. What can I do to help?

A: Many elementary schoolers freeze up at the thought of writing. They worry that what they write won't be any good.

To help your student beat writer's block and learn to communicate effectively in writing:

- **Ask what your child is feeling.** Listen, and allow your child to express frustration. Explain that professional writers have difficulty writing sometimes, too.
- **Encourage your child to make a list** of as many ideas as possible, without worrying about grammar or spelling. Editing for those things can come later.
- **Discuss the ideas with your child.** Ask questions to help your child think them through. After your conversation, it may be easier for your child to write the first draft.
- **Provide positive feedback.** When reviewing written work, focus on what your child is trying to say, not just the rules of writing. Praise what you like. Don't fix your child's mistakes—this sends the message that you don't think your child is capable of fixing them.



Parent Quiz

Are you teaching your child to be civil?

In school and in life, children must cooperate and learn from other people. Civil behavior smooths the way. Are you showing your child how to interact respectfully with others? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you set** an example by being kind and honest with your child and others?
2. **Do you encourage** your child to admit mistakes and try to make amends?
3. **Do you show** your child healthy ways to vent anger instead of taking it out on other people?
4. **Do you model** attentive listening by making eye contact with your child and restating what you hear?

5. **Do you uphold** rules and consequences fairly and consistently?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are demonstrating respectful actions and attitudes. For each no, try that idea.

"Respect is how to treat everyone, not just those you want to impress."
—Richard Branson

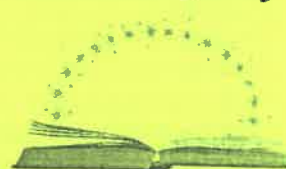
Foster 'conscientiousness'

Conscientious students work hard, think through choices and fulfill responsibilities. To encourage conscientiousness at home:

- **Teach** your child to take the time to work carefully—even when another activity seems more exciting.
- **Encourage** your child to keep trying—even when work is challenging.
- **Have** your child double-check work.

Boost an interest in history

The best historical fiction gives your child a vivid view of the human side of history's facts, dates and statistics.



To bring history to life through reading:

- **Ask a teacher or librarian** to recommend titles that present history accurately and avoid myths or stereotypes.
- **Choose books** with illustrations.
- **Read books aloud** that are a little above your child's reading level.
- **Have your child** read more than one book about the same era to get different perspectives.

Source: E. Codell, *How to Get Your Child to Love Reading*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Chores build school skills

Children who do chores at home can develop skills and attitudes that help in school. Assign chores that help your child learn to:

- **Follow directions.** Completing multi-step chores correctly is good practice for taking tests.
- **Plan and manage time.** Figuring out when to do chores to meet a deadline helps your child learn to prioritize time.
- **Consider others' needs.** This is an important part of teamwork.

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas families can use to help children
do well in school*



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE

March • April • May 2023

March 2023

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Children Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- ☐ 1. Try a new kind of transportation with your child, such as a bus, subway or train.
- ☐ 2. Together, write a poem about your family. Start each line with a letter from the word FAMILY.
- ☐ 3. Have your child watch for seasonal changes in plant and animal life in your neighborhood and keep notes in a journal.
- ☐ 4. Write fractions on cards. Mix them up. Have your child put them in order from smallest to greatest.
- ☐ 5. Celebrate National Noodle Month. Ask your child to help you fix pasta for dinner.
- ☐ 6. Place a long piece of string in a clear bag. Ask your child to estimate if it is longer or shorter than your height. Then take it out to check.
- ☐ 7. Give your child some objects to organize, by color, shape or size.
- ☐ 8. Ask your child questions that require more than a yes or no answer: "What was your favorite part of the story?"
- ☐ 9. Ask your child to draw a future self-portrait. What will your child look like in 10 years?
- ☐ 10. Have each family member write a funny sentence. Put them together to create a story.
- ☐ 11. It's Women's History Month. This year's theme is "Women Who Tell Our Stories." Help your child learn about a famous woman writer.
- ☐ 12. Go for a walk or bike ride today. Challenge each other to spot something you haven't seen before.
- ☐ 13. Play a card game, such as Go Fish, with your child.
- ☐ 14. Does your child have a special reading and study spot? Keep paper, pencils and other school supplies handy nearby.
- ☐ 15. Show your child how to figure out which way the wind is blowing by using a wet finger or looking at the trees.
- ☐ 16. Demonstrate how to take your child's pulse. Then have your child jump up and down 50 times and take it again.
- ☐ 17. Let your child use a toothpick dipped in lemon juice to write an invisible message. To read it, hold the paper up to a light bulb.
- ☐ 18. Help your child fold paper to make different types of airplanes. See which ones fly the best.
- ☐ 19. Plan a device-free night. Read or listen to music together instead.
- ☐ 20. Have your child write a short story from the point of view of a tree.
- ☐ 21. Ask your child, "What would you do with five dollars?"
- ☐ 22. Does your child know when your town was founded? If not, look it up together.
- ☐ 23. Play a game of Simon Says with your child.
- ☐ 24. Have a 20-minute DEAR time today (Drop Everything And Read).
- ☐ 25. Practice stress-busters together, such as breathing deeply.
- ☐ 26. Find a kid-friendly recipe. Help your child make that dish today.
- ☐ 27. Ask your child to use a "radio announcer voice" when reading to you.
- ☐ 28. Take turns describing the most beautiful places you and your child have ever seen.
- ☐ 29. Ask your child, "What are you thinking right now?"
- ☐ 30. Have your child fill in the blank: "If I had one wish, it would be ____."
- ☐ 31. Review some civics facts today. Can your child name the branches of the government?

April 2023

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Children Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Ask your child to write a poem or story about a favorite activity.
- 2. Use a permanent marker to mark off inches on the side of a straight-sided jar. Set the jar outside. See how many inches of rain fall this week.
- 3. Talk together about books you loved when you were your child's age.
- 4. Have your child rank assignments from easiest to hardest. Suggest tackling the hardest one first.
- 5. Have a family rhyming dinner. Invent rhyming names for the foods you serve.
- 6. Ask your child to draw a picture of something that happened in school today. Then talk about it.
- 7. Go on a map search through a printed or online newspaper. How many maps can your child find?
- 8. Have everyone in the family spend a half hour picking up the house. Many hands make light work.
- 9. Change chairs at mealtime. Each person pretend to be the person who usually sits in that chair.
- 10. It's National Poetry Month. Read three poems with your child today.
- 11. Time various tasks you and your child do in a day.
- 12. With your child, learn how to say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* in at least three different languages.
- 13. Look through news articles together. What headlines interest your child? Read an article aloud and discuss it.
- 14. Have a Geography Challenge. Name a state, province or country. Who can call out the capital first?
- 15. Brainstorm ways your family could help beautify your neighborhood.
- 16. Encourage your child to set a weekly goal. Write it down. Could you do this, too?
- 17. Have your child draw an upside-down picture today.
- 18. Sing your child's favorite song together.
- 19. Avoid a power struggle by challenging your child to come up with a solution that works for you both.
- 20. Set aside time every day for reading aloud. Sometimes, ask your child to read to you.
- 21. Ask your child, "What is something you have done in your life that makes you proud?"
- 22. Have your child make a list of items your family can reuse, repurpose or recycle.
- 23. Model positive work habits for your child, such as promptness, respect and responsibility.
- 24. Look over your child's schoolwork. Give specific compliments first, and then constructive criticism.
- 25. Ask your child to give you a tour of the school website.
- 26. Encourage your child to look up unfamiliar words in assignments in a dictionary.
- 27. Ask your child to listen for a certain word as you read and say it aloud on hearing it.
- 28. Take a walk with your child tonight. See how many stars you can see.
- 29. Visit the library with the whole family and be sure everyone checks out some books.
- 30. Plan to get some outdoor exercise with your child every day this week.

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May 2023

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Children Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Teach your child how to prepare nutritious after-school snacks.
- 2. Have each family member make a list of personal strengths. Read them aloud. Add to one another's lists.
- 3. Role-play a sticky situation together. What would your child do if friends were teasing someone at school?
- 4. Remind your child that it is not necessary to like a teacher in order to learn something in a class.
- 5. Learn together. Watch a "how-to" video with your child today.
- 6. Give your child some sidewalk chalk. Do math problems outside together.
- 7. Ask your child to give you an "evening news" report about what happened at school today. What's the scoop?
- 8. Play Alphabet Mix-up. Choose a word and put the letters in alphabetical order. Can your child figure out the word?
- 9. Have your child thread a button onto some string, then make the button spin.
- 10. Low grades indicate a problem to be solved. Ask what your child thinks the problem is. What could your student do to fix it?
- 11. Challenge your child to do a secret good deed for someone at school.
- 12. Create a display of your child's best schoolwork. Rotate the work on display frequently.
- 13. Have your child write and send a letter or email to a relative.
- 14. Tonight, let your child stay up later to read.
- 15. Ask the school about dates for year-end tests. Make sure your child gets enough sleep the nights before.
- 16. Teach your child how to disagree respectfully.
- 17. Make up a song featuring your child's name.
- 18. Ask your child, "What is the nicest thing a friend has ever done for you?"
- 19. Talk with your child about your family's origins.
- 20. Go on a picnic with your child today. After eating, stretch out on a blanket and read together.
- 21. Do a crossword puzzle with your child today.
- 22. Cover the illustration on a page of a book. Read the page aloud. Can your child guess what's in the picture?
- 23. Make a list with your child of words that came from other languages. Here's a start: *vamoose*, *taco*, *pasta*.
- 24. Have a pattern day. Ask your child to notice patterns all around, such as a striped shirt or streets arranged alphabetically.
- 25. Ask your child to choose a country and learn more about it.
- 26. How many types of punctuation can your child find today?
- 27. Celebrate National Bike Month by having your child review the "rules of the road."
- 28. If you give your child an allowance, set guidelines for how much should be used for buying things, saving and giving to charity.
- 29. It's Memorial Day. Talk with your child about why this holiday is celebrated in the United States.
- 30. Get out five pipe cleaners. Challenge your child to twist and bend them to create an animal.
- 31. Together, read a book about your town or state.

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