

Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

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Women's History Month is a great time to read a biography

March is Women's History Month—the perfect time for your child to read a biography about a famous woman. Help her select a biography she will enjoy by talking with her about her interests.

If your child likes:

- **Sports**, she might like to read about Wilma Rudolph, a three-time Olympic gold medal winner.
- **Science**, she may be interested in learning about Marie Curie, the only person to win a Nobel Prize in two different sciences—chemistry and physics.
- **Politics**, she might like to read about Victoria Woodhull, who in 1870 became the first woman to run for president.

- **Fashion**, she might like to read about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who was considered a cultural and fashion icon in the 1960s.
 - **Helping others**, she might like to learn more about Mother Teresa, who dedicated her life to serving the poor and disadvantaged.
- Whatever your child's interests, there is sure to be a biography she might enjoy reading. Ask the librarian for help if you don't see a book that catches her interest right away.

Read the book with your child or let her read it on her own, but don't stop there. Encourage her to do some additional research on the person and share what she finds out.

This four-step process can end procrastination



At one time or another, most kids put off doing their homework.

But when procrastination becomes a habit, it can affect school performance.

To help your child break the procrastination habit, have him:

1. **Select just one thing to do.** Sometimes kids put things off when they feel overwhelmed. Tell your child to focus on one assignment at a time.
2. **Set a timer for 30 minutes** and begin working on the assignment. While the timer is ticking, he should focus only on that assignment.
3. **Avoid breaks.** Your child should get water or a snack *before* he starts the timer so he doesn't interrupt his work flow.
4. **Reward himself.** Once the timer goes off, encourage your child to do something he likes, such as playing an online game for a few minutes.

Have your child repeat this process until his assignment is complete!

Source: R. Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child: A Handbook for Adults to Help Children Stop Putting Things Off*, Walker & Company.

Should you make your child redo a homework assignment?



You are looking over your child's homework and you notice that a few of his answers are incorrect. Should you make him redo it?

According to experts, you should not ask your child to redo his homework if just *some* of his work is wrong. Instead, point out the items that are incorrect, and let your child choose whether or not to correct them.

This policy makes it clear that homework is your child's responsibility and it also helps avoid power struggles over homework. Leaving incorrect work also enables the teacher to see where your child needs help.

There are, however, two reasons you should ask your child to redo his homework:

1. **The assignment** was done in a hurry and is sloppy.
2. **The entire assignment** is totally wrong.

Source: J. Craig, "What Happened in School Today?"—*Helping Your Child Handle Everyday School Problems*, Skylight Press.

"The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference."

—Aristotle

March weather activities can teach your child science skills



According to the old saying, March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Is this true where you live?

In many parts of the country, the month of March brings changeable weather—which makes it a great time to enjoy science and other weather-related activities.

Try these ideas with your child:

- **Keep a temperature graph.** Have your child record the temperature each day for a month. Or, use the online weather report for your area. Record whether the day was sunny, cloudy or rainy.
- **Measure the rain.** You'll need a plastic jar with straight sides and a flat bottom, a ruler and a marker. On the outside of the jar, use the ruler and marker to mark off each quarter inch.

Have your child keep track of the amount of rainfall.

- **Make wind chimes.** You'll need four clean, empty cans, some string and a coat hanger. Make sure the edges of the cans are smooth. Help your child punch a hole in the bottom of each can. Tie a knot in one end of the string and thread the string through the can. Then tie the other end of the string to your hanger. Each time the wind blows, it will make music!
- Your child can also go online to learn more about weather. Check out these fun, age-appropriate websites:
- **Weather Wiz Kids**, www.weatherwizkids.com.
 - **The Old Farmer's Almanac for Kids**, www.almanac4kids.com/weather.
 - **Space Weather Center**, www.spaceweathercenter.org.

Do you encourage your child to work independently?



"Mom, I can't do it. I need help!" Every child makes that plea once in a while. But if your child says it every day, you

may need to help her become more independent.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are fostering self-reliance:

- ___ 1. **Do you tell** your child that you believe she can do it?
- ___ 2. **Do you help** her break big projects down into smaller pieces that are easier to finish?
- ___ 3. **Do you remind** her of the importance of effort? "You couldn't ride a bike the first time you tried. But you kept at it. You'll learn this, too, if you keep at it."
- ___ 4. **Do you ask** her questions when she gets stuck? "What did you learn when you read the chapter?"
- ___ 5. **Do you compliment** your child when she finishes work on her own?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are helping your child learn how to work on her own. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Use the internet to help your child develop research skills



Even elementary school students need to be able to do research on the internet. Have some fun teaching your child about some of the interesting things she can find online.

Use a computer at home or at your local library and try these two games:

1. **Scavenger hunt.** Make a list of 10 questions for which there is only one correct answer. For example: *What's the temperature in Madrid right now? What's the longest river in Asia? Who was the last Olympic Gold Medal winner in women's figure skating?* Then start a timer and see how quickly your

child can find the answers. As she searches for answers, encourage her to come up with a variety of search terms. Give the same list of questions to another family member and see who gets the best time!

2. **Panning for gold.** Choose a famous person or event from history. Give everyone in the family 15 minutes to search the internet for interesting facts about that person or event. After everyone has taken a turn, share what each of you has learned. Vote for whose “nugget” of information turned out to be gold!

Bring geography to life with fun and educational activities



Helping your child learn about geography can make the entire world more relevant to him.

To get your child thinking a little bit more about geography, have him:

- **Draw a map** of how to get from your house to school, the grocery store or a friend's house. Then follow the map together.
- **Walk outside** and identify *north, south, east* and *west*, as well as *northeast, northwest, southeast* and *southwest*. Challenge him to describe where things in your town are located. “My school is *northeast* of my house.” “City Hall is *south* of the zoo.”
- **Go through your house** and talk about where various items came from. Look for labels to see where things were made. A calculator

may have come from Taiwan. A box of cereal may have a Battle Creek, Michigan or Chicago, Illinois address. Locate them on a map.

- **Look for street patterns.** In some towns, streets run north and south, while avenues run east and west. Or, street names may be alphabetical. Help your child see the patterns.
- **Start a collection** of objects from countries around the world. Stamps, postcards and coins are all easy items to collect, categorize and store.
- **Learn more about** where his ancestors came from. Find these places on a map. If possible, help him learn about the routes his ancestors traveled when they came to this country. Where do your relatives live now? Again, check the map.

Q: The principal called to tell me that my fifth grader shoved a child to the ground at school today. As a result, my child is going to be suspended for one day. I know this is the school's policy; however, my son says the other boy said mean things to him first. Should I go to the school to complain?

Questions & Answers

A: Kids don't always make the right choices. What's important is the lesson they learn after they've made a bad choice. Arguing with the school on your son's behalf can teach him the wrong lesson.

Start by talking with your son about the incident. Does he admit that he pushed the other child? It's important for him to learn to tell the truth about what he's done.

He needs to learn that pushing people is not acceptable—even if they call him names. Help your son think of other ways he might have reacted. He could have ignored the child, for example.

If name-calling continues, your child should tell a teacher. If he had reported the incident, the *other* child might now be the one in trouble.

Talk about why schools need rules. What if he had been the one who was shoved? Would he want the child who shoved him to face a consequence?

Finally, let your child experience the consequence of his action. The day of his suspension, don't let him watch TV. Have him spend the same time studying that he would have spent in class. At the end of the day, let him know he has served his punishment.

It Matters: Test Success

Test-taking strategies can boost success



Your child has a big test tomorrow, and she wants to do her best. Encourage her to follow these test-taking strategies:

to follow these test-taking strategies:

- **Focus on directions.** Whether they are written or given out loud, your child should make sure she understands them before she begins.
- **Write down information.** If your child struggled to memorize something, she should write it down as soon as the test starts, so she can refer to it later.
- **Read through all the questions** quickly before starting. Your child should think about how much time she has and decide how much time she can spend on each question.
- **Skip a question if unsure** of the answer. Your child should answer all the questions she knows first. Then she can come back to the others.
- **Remember true/false tricks.** If any part of an answer is false, the whole answer is false!
- **Use multiple-choice strategies.** She should try to answer the question before looking at the choices. Or, eliminate the wrong answers and see what's left.
- **Outline essays.** Instead of writing freely, she should make a plan and stick to main points and key details. Even a brief outline is better than no answer.
- **Allow time to go back** and check answers. Do they make sense? Are sentences complete?

Four ways to reduce your child's anxiety before a test

It's normal to get a little nervous before a big test, but many children suffer from excessive test anxiety. They worry so much about taking the test that their performance suffers.

To help your child diffuse those pre-test jitters:

1. **Focus on preparation.** Make sure he spreads studying out over time. True learning requires time to review and think about the content. And knowing the material is the best way to reduce anxiety and stress.
2. **Discourage cramming.** Cramming the night before a test often increases anxiety, which can interfere with clear thinking. The most important things your child can do the day before a test are to review and then get a good night's sleep.
3. **Encourage a positive outlook.** Build your child's confidence by



reminding him of his strengths. Have him envision himself doing well on the test.

4. **Maintain perspective.** Remind him that test scores aren't everything. Make sure your child knows that, while you want him to do his best, he doesn't have to be the best.

Take time to review test results with your elementary schooler



When your child brings home a test, take time to review it together. A quick review can be an excellent way to help your child do better on the next test.

First, talk about the things that your child did well—even if her overall performance on the test was not as good as you both would have liked. At the very least, let her know that you know she can do better,

and that you will work with her to find ways to help her improve.

Then, talk about the answers she got wrong and why she answered the way she did. Review any teacher comments with her. They can be especially helpful. In some cases, your child may need additional work in basic areas (she may need more practice in basic math functions, for example). In other cases, she simply may have misunderstood a question or made a careless error.