

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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Prompts encourage your child to write—and think—this summer

Help your child keep her writing skills sharp this summer—and help her build a love of writing while you're at it! Keep a list of writing prompts handy so you can pose some irresistible questions to ask your child to answer in writing. For example:

- **When does summer officially begin?** Is it when the pool opens? When school closes? On the first 90-degree day? Give your child some ideas, but let her imagination and research do the rest.
- **How do you sense it's summer?** Have your child describe how summer smells, looks, sounds, feels and tastes.
- **What's your favorite summer memory?** Try writing about it in the present tense. "I'm five years old. Dad walks me to the beach. We get our feet wet and jump over waves! I'm happy and scared, so I scream as loud as I can!"
- **Is summer a beauty, a beast or both?** Write a poem about what makes summer wonderful—or terrible. Perhaps your child loves fireflies and s'mores but can't stand mosquitoes and sunscreen.
- **What if summer didn't exist?** If it were spring, then fall, then winter, would your child miss summer? How would this make her feel? Is there another season she'd like to skip? Or would she like to have two of a certain season?



Source: C. Dunmire, "Summer Writing Prompts," www.creativity-portal.com/howto/writing/summer.writing.prompts.html.



Plans help tackle end-of-year projects

As the end of the school year draws near, your child may have large projects. Many kids put off projects until the last minute, which can drive parents crazy.

Here are some steps you can take to make sure that your child's project doesn't send your family into panic mode:

- **Make a plan.** Write the due date on the calendar. Ask your child questions about what he'll need to do to get ready.
- **Make a schedule.** Having several smaller deadlines is much easier than trying to meet one big one. Write each of these dates on the calendar.
- **Celebrate successes.** Each time your child reaches a goal, help him figure out a small reward.
- **Check in.** See how he is progressing to help him stay on track for meeting deadlines.

Source: D. Heacox, *Up from Underachievement*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Create a family chore chart

Summer is a good time for your child to practice his responsibility skills so he can put them to use once the new school year starts.

A chore chart will help your child learn:

- **A household skill.** Show your child how to do the chore. Once he knows what to do, you can add it to the chart.
- **Consistency.** Some chores are done every day, while others may be done just once a week. Learning consistent behavior will help him work on school assignments on a regular basis.

Source: S. Aguirre, "What Are the Benefits of a Chore Chart?" <http://tinyurl.com/c8hnhvy>.

Volunteering can teach your child important skills

Community service teaches children to be responsible and compassionate citizens. Plan to volunteer as a family this summer.

Think about your child's interests. She may want to:

- **Beautify** a public spot, like a park.
- **Help** a community food bank collect and sort food.
- **Play** with pets at an animal shelter.
- **Visit** elderly members of the community.



Source: "Community Service: A Family's Guide to Getting Involved," KidsHealth, <http://tinyurl.com/27djz8t>.

Boredom can spark your child's imagination

"I'm bored!" may be a frequent cry from your child this summer. But a little boredom can encourage kids to be creative.

With time on his hands, suggest that your child build a fort from a blanket and chairs. Encourage him to draw with crayons and chalk. Offer to help him read a book or write a story!



Source: A. Rosenfeld and N. Wise, *Hyper-Parenting: Are You Hurting Your Child by Trying Too Hard?*, St. Martin's Press.



How can I ensure my child has friends I approve of?

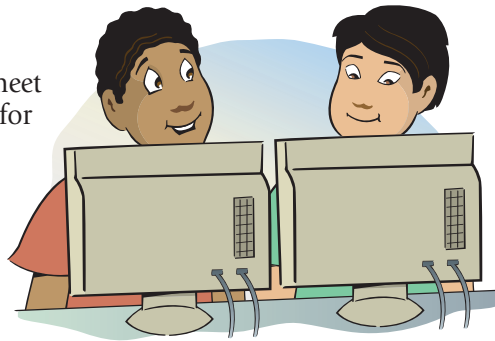
Q: This past year, my son hung out with a group of students I didn't like. They didn't do well in school and said school didn't matter. I suspect that when my son was at their houses, he played violent video games that we don't allow at home. Now summer is coming. How can I help him find new friends?

A: Summer vacation may be a good time to help your son find a new group of friends. But you can't just sit back and wait for it to happen. You'll need to take action.

First, get him involved with positive activities where he will meet other kids. Can you sign him up for a computer class or a summer enrichment program? These opportunities remind your child that education is your family's priority, and they give him the chance to make new friends whose families share the same values.

Second, limit the time he spends with his old crowd. You might set up a fun activity for him to do with a friend you approve of. "How about inviting Mike to come over and play soccer with us on Sunday?"

Your son will still see these negative friends at school next fall. But the friendships he forms this summer will encourage him to spend less time with them.



Are you encouraging your child to read?

Sometimes, kids who are good readers just don't like to read. This can make parents nervous. Luckily, there are some things parents can do to encourage a non-reader to pick up a book. Are you doing all you can to help your child learn to enjoy reading? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Do you read** aloud even though your child can read by herself? It's a great way to show you value reading.
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to try books in a series? If she likes one, she'll likely enjoy all of them.
- ___ **3. Do you make** it difficult to watch TV? Without a TV in your child's bedroom, she'll be more likely to read.
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to read comic books if

she wants to? You can read them with her.

- ___ **5. Do you look** for books or magazines about the things that interest your child?

How well are you doing? *Each yes means you are helping your child become a kid who loves reading.*

"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."
—Anthony J. D'Angelo

Emphasize fairness and following the rules

The win-at-any-cost approach to life in today's society affects children. Whether in sports or at school, many children think rules are for somebody else.

To teach your child that respecting rules and authority will help her succeed:

- **Keep expectations realistic.** Let your child do her own schoolwork. Even if she makes mistakes, she'll be learning from them. If your behavior suggests that only A's are acceptable, she may be more likely to break the rules in order to get that grade.
- **Be a role model.** Let your child see you follow the rules. If you see someone breaking a rule, talk about it. If you see someone drive through a stop sign, ask, "How did that person put her needs ahead of the safety of others?"

Stress these three C's

A healthy sense of self-esteem will help your child stand up to life's challenges. It will also boost his ability to achieve in school.

Work toward these three C's:

- **Competence.**
- **Confidence.**
- **Control.**



Source: B. McClain, "Building Resilience in Children," *Healthy Children*, Winter 2007, American Academy of Pediatrics.

Plan a consistent summer schedule for your family

Summer is a time to relax—but not to relax important routines. Reinforce the progress your child made during the school year and stick to key routines, including:

- **Sleep.** Establish a reasonable sleep schedule for your child.
- **Screen time.** Extra free time should not mean more TV and video games.
- **Meals.** Strive to have at least one family meal a day.

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