

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Valley Stream Christian Academy
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Ask questions that get your child to think six important ways

To succeed in school, children have to be able to think about what they are learning. Asking questions is one effective way you can help your child develop her thinking skills.

A classification system used by educators, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, divides thinking processes into six categories. When you talk with your child about what she's learning, ask questions that encourage her to:



- 1. Remember.** Ask your child to recall basic facts, such as *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*. "When did the war start?" Her answers should be clearly right or wrong.
- 2. Understand.** Have your child describe, explain, or give an example based on what she knows about a subject. "What was the main character in the book trying to do?"
- 3. Apply.** Ask your child to use what she's learned to think about a new situation. "Chickens hatch from eggs. Do you think ostriches do, too?"
- 4. Analyze.** Discuss how something works or how it's organized. "What would the next number in this series be? How can you tell?"
- 5. Evaluate.** Help your child think critically. "What do you think was most important to the American colonists? Why?"
- 6. Create.** Get your child to use what she knows without worrying about being right or wrong. "What would life be like if you lived on the moon?"

Source: "Revised Bloom's Taxonomy—Question Starters," College of Education, Illinois State University, niswc.com/bloom.



When a task is dreaded, do it first

Does your child put his least-favorite assignment at the bottom of his to-do list? Encourage him to try moving it to the top, instead. Here's why:

- **Unpleasant jobs** are a part of life. We all have to do things we don't like. Talk to your child about some of the jobs you don't enjoy, but have to do anyway.
- **Putting off** a difficult task can make it seem more difficult. Until your child gets that challenging assignment finished, it's going to weigh on his mind.
- **Finishing a dreaded task** feels wonderful. Help him focus

on how great he'll feel when the job is done. Let him build in a small reward for completing it, such as a 10-minute break to shoot hoops.

A nudge from you can ease the process. Set a timer for 15 minutes and say, "Work until the timer dings. Then you can stop." Once your child gets started, he may find the task is not as painful as he thought.

Source: R. Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child*, Walker and Company.

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Correct behavior with care

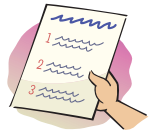
Productive discipline helps your child learn what she did wrong—and how she can make a better choice in the future. The key is to stay calm and remember to:

- **Be consistent.** Don't set rules unless you'll enforce them every time.
- **Avoid criticizing.** Just point out where your child went wrong, and talk about what she could do differently next time.

Call for family meetings

Holding regular family meetings is a great way to teach your child about communication and cooperation. To get the most from a family meeting:

- **Create an agenda.** Ask family members in advance what they'd like to discuss.
- **Keep it brief**—less than one hour.
- **Take turns.** After someone describes an idea or problem, give each person time to contribute thoughts or solutions.
- **Choose ideas to try.** Write down decisions for future review if needed.



Source: T.W. Phelan, Ph.D., *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*, Sourcebooks, Inc.

Talking leads to learning

Did you know you can build your child's vocabulary, language skills and interest in reading just by talking with him? Talk often about:

- **Everyday events.** Visit new places and use new words. "The *columns* at the museum's entrance make it look grand."
- **Book characters.** Do any of them remind your child of himself? What would he do in their shoes?
- **Questions.** Wonder about things such as, "Why don't clouds fall out of the sky?" Together, brainstorm ideas, then read to find the answer.





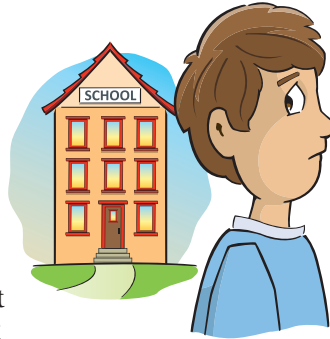
How do I handle my child's medical condition at school?

Q: My son has just been diagnosed with asthma. He doesn't want anyone at school to know because he says he still wants to "have fun with his friends" at recess. How can I work with the school—without having my child singled out?

A: Asthma is a serious health condition. Every year it causes around 14 million absences from school. Explain to your child that it's important to tell the teacher about his asthma. Then work with your child, his teacher and the school staff to create plans to protect his health and privacy. Be sure to:

- **Review the school rules** about medicine at school. Fill out required forms. Be sure that your child knows how to take his medication.
- **Talk with your child's teachers** about things that trigger his attacks, such as overexertion or exposure to animals, mold, pollen or dust. Let them know of his concerns about being singled out. Teach your child to monitor himself and avoid situations that bring on attacks.
- **Create an action plan** so that your child and the school staff know what to do if he has an attack.

Let your son know that asthma doesn't have to prevent him from having fun at recess. But he will have to learn how to take care of himself and respect his limits so that he can stay healthy.



Chores build school skills

When your child does chores at home, he develops skills and attitudes that can help him in school. Chores promote responsibility, and doing them can teach your child to:

- **Follow directions.** Following instructions when doing laundry is no different from following directions on a test.
- **Take pride in his work.** The feeling he gets from doing a job well at home can help him persist with challenging projects at school.
- **Consider others' needs.** Knowing his work helps your family may motivate your child to put effort into class projects.

Source: R. Rende, Ph.D. and J. Prosek, *Raising Can-Do Kids*, TarcherPerigee.

There's science at the end of this rainbow

Try this colorful experiment with your child: Set a clear glass filled with water on a sunny windowsill. Put a large sheet of white paper on the floor underneath. The water acts like raindrops and bends the sunlight, splitting it into its spectrum of colors. The colors show up on the paper as a rainbow.



Source: E.R. Churchill and others, *365 Simple Science Experiments with Everyday Materials*, Black Dog & Leventhal.

Be a reading role model

Children whose parents read often usually grow up to be readers themselves. To show your child that reading is important to you:

- **Let her see you reading** every day.
- **Explain why** you are reading—for information, to learn something new, or just for fun.
- **Give books as gifts.** It shows you value them.
- **Look up words** you are unsure of in the dictionary. Talk about their meanings.

Parent Quiz

Are you teaching decision-making?

As children grow up, they must make more and more decisions for themselves. Are you doing all you can now to prepare your child to make wise choices? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you give** your child opportunities to make choices every day? They can be small, but she should have to live with the choices she makes.
- ___ **2. Do you talk** about family decisions together?
- ___ **3. Do you think** out loud sometimes when you are making a choice?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to ask questions?
- ___ **5. Do you teach** your child that every decision has consequences?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're teaching your child to think through decisions. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"To have respect for ourselves guides our morals; and to have a deference for others governs our manners."

—Laurence Sterne

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