

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

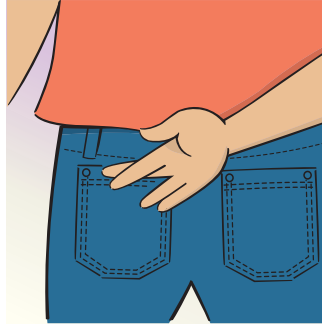


December 2016

Lafourche Parish Media Center  
Title I Parent Involvement

## To promote honesty, make it easy for your child to tell the truth

By the time children reach elementary school, most know the difference between being honest and lying. But that doesn't mean that they are honest all the time! Children lie for many different reasons—to avoid consequences, to win attention or approval, or to get out of things they don't want to do. But honesty is a fundamental part of good character, and it's an essential trait for academic achievement.



To encourage your child to be honest:

- **Talk about it.** Tell your child that your family values honesty and you expect him to be honest. Let him know that you will be happy that he told you the truth—even if he has done something wrong.
- **Discuss the consequences of lying.** Explain that lying destroys trust. People may not believe what he says, even when he's telling the truth.
- **Be a role model.** Children are good lie detectors. They notice when parents tell the truth—and when they don't. If your child catches you being dishonest, admit you were wrong.
- **Create opportunities for truth-telling.** Instead of inviting a lie by asking "Did you do this?" say, "You broke my vase. How did it happen?"
- **React calmly.** When you catch your child in a lie, don't label him a liar. Talk about what happened and what he could have done instead of lying. Express confidence that he will make better choices in the future.

Source: M. Hartwell-Walker, Ed.D., "When a Child Lies," PsychCentral, niswc.com/honest.



## Brush up on some toothpaste science

Here's an experiment to help your child learn about the power of toothpaste to protect her teeth. Gather two jars, two uncooked eggs, two cups of white vinegar and some plastic wrap. Then have your child:

1. **Label the jars.** Label one *plain egg* and the other *toothpaste egg*.
2. **Add a cup of vinegar** to each jar.
3. **Spread toothpaste** all over one egg and put it in the *toothpaste egg* jar.
4. **Put the other egg** into the jar labeled *plain egg*.
5. **Cover the jars** with plastic wrap and observe for four days.

Bubbles will form around the plain egg. By day two its shell will be gritty and the egg will be bigger. After three days the shell will be gone and the egg will be soft and rubbery. Meanwhile, the toothpaste egg will show little change.

Explain to your child that teeth and eggshells are both made of calcium compounds. Toothpaste protects them against decay. She will see why she needs to brush her teeth!

## Have fun with punctuation!

Proper punctuation makes writing easy to read. If your child needs punctuation practice, make it a game. Write a brief story, leaving out the punctuation. Try to read it together—it's hard!



Next, have your child add punctuation that makes the story easy to read. What happens to the story if he punctuates it differently?

## Plan to keep on learning

A winter break from school doesn't have to be a break from learning. To keep your child's brain engaged, help her:

- **Discover the past** by interviewing older relatives—even you. Help her write a list of questions to ask, such as, "What was school like for you?"
- **Compare a movie to the book** it's based on. Together, read the book, then watch the movie. How were the two alike? How were they different?
- **Research and prepare** a holiday dish from another culture.

## Service to the community benefits your child

Volunteering teaches kids that they can make a difference in people's lives. Here are some activities you and your child can do together now—and all year long—to help others:



- **Bake a treat** for a senior citizen or a new parent.
- **Fill warm socks** with wrapped snacks to give to the homeless.
- **Participate in a clothing drive.** Many charities collect coats, gloves and hats and donate them to shelters.

Source: "35+ Service Projects for Kids," kidworldcitizen, niswc.com/give.



## How do I help my child cope with a family separation?

**Q:** My husband is deployed overseas. The longer he has been gone, the harder it has been on my third grader. Her grades have started to suffer. How can I help her through a difficult holiday season and get her back on track at school?

**A:** Your child is going through a tough time. Being separated from a parent is always hard. During the holidays, it can be even harder. Here are some ways to help:



- **Let your child know** it is OK to miss her father. Say something like, "We love Daddy very much. Of course we're going to miss him. Whenever you feel sad, you can talk to me."
- **Help your husband stay in touch** with your child as well as with you. Encourage him to call, send videos and email. Then, help your daughter reply.
- **Talk to your child's teacher.** Be sure she understands your daughter's situation. Ask her how to help your child get her grades back on track.
- **Talk to your child about holiday traditions** you want to continue. Even though it won't be like other years, baking, decorating or watching a favorite holiday video together can make this a special time for you both.
- **Look for ways you and your child can help others.** Your child may view her problems differently when she sees others who need help.



## Are you making mornings easier?

Does your child have trouble getting ready for school on time? Some kids seem to have only one speed—slow. But there are things parents can do to help. Are you helping your dawdler get going? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you make sure** your child goes to bed in time to get nine to 12 hours of sleep?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you make time** at night for your child to lay out clothes and pack his book bag?
- \_\_\_ **3. Does your child have** a checklist of things he must do to get ready in the morning?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you give** your child "two-minute warnings" to ease transitions?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you build** extra time into your family's morning schedule?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your child move efficiently in the morning. For each no, try that idea.*

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."*

—Dr. Seuss

## Charge up your cybersafety

These days, kids use computers, tablets and phones for everything from learning to socializing. But the digital world can be dangerous, and parents must promote internet safety. Experts recommend that you:

- **Go online** with your child. Let him show you his favorite websites and apps. Guide him to child-friendly resources.
- **Monitor** your child's online activities.
- **Discuss** internet safety and establish basic rules. For age-appropriate rules, visit [www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledges](http://www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledges).
- **Remind** your child not to reply to inappropriate messages. If he receives one, he should tell a trusted adult.

## Pave the path to success

Research shows that children do better in school when their parents have high (but realistic) expectations for them. When your child knows you believe she can succeed, she'll believe it, too. So, send her to school with an "I know you can do it!" She'll have the confidence she needs to do her best.

Source: S. Wilder, "Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: a meta-synthesis," *Educational Review*, [nswc.com/expectations](http://nswc.com/expectations).

## Show your child the world

It's a great big world. You can help expand your child's knowledge of other countries and cultures. Together:



- **Read about customs** of people around the world.
- **Watch plays, movies** or puppet shows about life in other lands. Many libraries and museums present these programs.
- **Learn foreign phrases.** Learn to count to 10 and say *hello* and *thank you*.
- **Watch TV programs** about other countries. Locate the places on a map.

### Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-1013