

# **Parenting Tips** from Parent-Institute.com



## **Start the school year off with research-based tips for success**

The start of a new school year is filled with promise. Notebooks are filled with shiny white paper. Crayons still have their sharpened points. Even your child's backpack is organized!

The start of a school year can also be a time for you to set some goals. Research has identified three easy—but important—ways to help your child do better in school this year:

1. Get to know your child's teacher. When parents and teachers are on the same team, kids do better in school. So make plans to go to back-to-school night. If you can't attend, contact the teacher to set up a short meeting to talk. Once you've met face to face, you'll find it easier to ask a question or share a concern about your child.
2. Settle into a routine. Kids thrive on predictability. So have a regular time for doing school work. Set—and keep—a regular bedtime. Plan a morning routine that gets everyone out the door on time. Your family will be happier and you'll all have less stress.
3. Make reading a habit. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes each day for reading time. If your child is learning to read, let her show off her new skills. Set aside some time when you all read together and then talk about what you've read. If your child sees you reading, she's sure to catch the reading habit.

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## **Working With Your School:**

### **Team up with your child's teacher for success in school this year**

Research shows that parent involvement in education is connected to student success at school. It's powerful when teachers, parents and kids work together! But the family-school relationship is like any other—it requires good communication. Make a point to:

- Set the tone. It's natural to have questions and concerns when the school year begins. To build a strong parent-teacher foundation, let the teacher know that you appreciate her work. Ask key questions respectfully. Show support for your child and the class, and encourage the teacher to keep in touch.

- Be positive. When you talk with the teacher, enjoy hearing about your child's strengths. But prepare to hear about weaknesses or misbehavior, too. Remember to react helpfully. You and the teacher both want your child to do well. Addressing struggles is the way to find solutions.
- Role-play. Some parents are shy about talking with the teacher. If this describes you, imagine meeting with her. What would you say? How would you respond to questions? Practice with someone else you trust. Take turns presenting both points of view. Still worried? Using email may put you at ease.
- Choose words carefully. Make polite requests rather than demands. A helpful tip is to use "we" instead of "you." ("How can we stay in touch to help Adam?") rather than "You should tell me if Adam is falling behind.") The teacher isn't your opponent; she's your teammate.

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## Ready to Learn:

### Help your child get organized for the school year

It's the beginning of a new school year—the perfect time to set the stage for learning success. Help your child get off to a good start with these simple steps:

- Get a head start. Many families find that organizing at night prevents morning "rush hour." You can review school papers, pack and refrigerate lunches, set backpacks by the door and agree on outfits.
- Establish sleep routines. Choose reasonable bedtimes so everyone is rested when the alarm clock goes off. Do your best to stick with them.
- Develop morning habits. If your child does the same things (in the same order) each morning, it's less likely that she will forget a step. For example, make bed, get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth and put on shoes.
- Choose a homework time. With your child, pick a time when she will have the most energy and motivation to do assignments. Create a quiet study spot (complete with necessary supplies) where she can work at the same time each day.
- Use organizational tools. What will help your child stay organized? She might use calendars, to-do lists or a folder system.
- Set priorities. Schedule things like schoolwork, family meals and even free time on a calendar. Treat them like appointments. If there are openings, she can add activities.

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### Teach your child to persevere when faced with challenges

If your child has a goal he wants to reach, such as earning an “A” on a project or making the travel soccer team, achieving it will probably take hard work. And there may be times your child feels like giving up. It’s important to teach your child to persevere, even when things are difficult. Here’s how:

- Discuss past success. For example, did your child save up to buy something expensive? How did he do it? What did success feel like? What did he learn?
- Choose a fun, realistic objective. Make it something your child is likely to complete soon. If he wants to read a series of books, start with just the first one. Achievement is a great motivator.
- Listen for ideas. Kids often mention goals without actually setting them. (“I’d love to be in the talent show” or “I hope I finish my report this week.”) Together, create a step-by-step plan for success.
- Be a cheerleader. Say things like, “You’re sticking with this. I’m impressed!” Even if your child misses the mark, praise his efforts. Trying hard and learning from mistakes is a major accomplishment.

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## Attendance Matters

### Research confirms importance of regular school attendance

Parents often wonder, “Is it okay to take my child out of school for an appointment or a vacation? Could this really affect his success?”

New research on kindergartners through third graders answers that question. It suggests “chronic absence” (missing 10% or more of days in a school year) is linked to:

- Low performance in school. It’s also connected to dropping out, substance abuse and more.
- Lost learning time for kids who are at school. When absent kids come back, teachers must help them catch up.

Show your child that your family cares about learning by making sure he is at school on time every day. Attending school is his responsibility. Of course, if your child is sick, he should stay home.

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