

# The Road to School Success



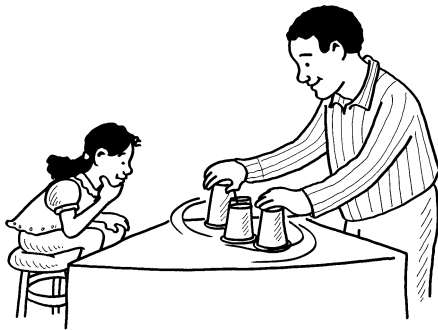
Your child's school career is a journey that will take her from ABCs and 123s to complex novels and challenging math problems. Here are helpful ways to fuel her journey with focus, organization, motivation, and curiosity.

## Focus

Like a driver or a pedestrian, a good student must pay attention. Consider this advice for helping your youngster concentrate, whether she's in class or studying at home.

### Play "attention games"

Enjoy games that train your child's brain to focus, such as Simon Says, Mother May I?, and Red Light, Green Light.



Another game she may like that requires close attention is Cup Swap. Place three cups upside down in a row. While your youngster watches carefully, put a coin or token under one cup, and quickly move

the cups around so they swap places repeatedly. When you stop, can she tell you which cup has the coin beneath it? Now let her do a cup swap for you!

### Practice healthy habits

Help your child develop habits that boost concentration. A good night's sleep (9–11 hours) and a nutritious breakfast get him ready to focus in school because he won't be distracted by

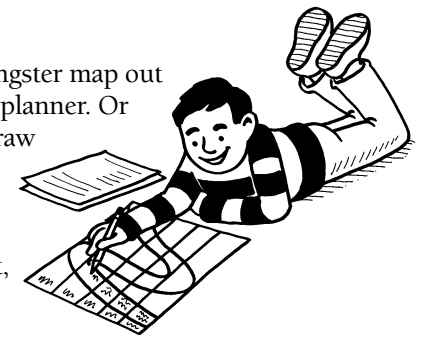
fatigue or a growling stomach. Before he does homework, he could eat a healthy snack (string cheese and whole-grain crackers or carrot sticks and hummus, for example) and "get the wiggles out" by dancing to music or taking a walk with you. Finally, make sure your youngster works in a distraction-free zone—away from noisy siblings and with electronics turned off.

## Organization

A journey that is well planned is more likely to be successful. Try these ideas to help your child manage his time and materials.

### Create a "road map"

Suggest that your youngster map out his week using a student planner. Or try this idea: Have him draw a path on construction paper that begins at one corner and winds to the opposite corner. Next, he should add lines to divide the sheet into five columns and label each with a weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday). He could write homework assignments and other obligations in each space. *Examples:* "Study spelling words." "Make diorama for social studies." Every day after school, review his planner or his map together, and talk about when he'll do each task. He can check off each item as he completes it or color in that day's spaces on his road map.



**Manage papers and supplies**

Encourage your child to keep her backpack and her homework area organized. By carrying only what she needs in her bag, she’s less likely to lose important papers. Suggest that she clean it out every Friday after school, discarding scrap paper, hanging up artwork, and filing old quizzes. Also, have her keep homework supplies in one spot so she’s not sidetracked by searching for something like a ruler or colored pencils. *Idea:* Let her fill a basket or box with paper, pencils, a calculator, erasers, and other supplies. She could store her “homework tote” on her desk or carry it to the kitchen table when she does homework.

**Motivation**

The best motivation is *self*-motivation. Your youngster can keep chugging along during his journey through school with these suggestions.

**Make decisions**

Children tend to be more motivated if they feel like they have a say in what they do or when they do it. Try to give your youngster choices about when to work or what to read at bedtime. You could ask, “Which subject will you study first, science or history?” or “Which book should we read tonight?” If he gets to pick the topic for a report

or project, encourage him to choose one that he will find motivating, perhaps something related to a hobby or a sport he loves. Point out that he can even make choices when he takes a test—perhaps which questions to answer first or how to approach a math problem.

**Work hard**

Focusing on your child’s efforts rather than on her intelligence or grades shows that she is in the “driver’s seat” and in control of her performance. Maybe she studies hard and does well on a geography test. You might say, “Quizzing yourself a little each day really helped you learn the material!” You’ll tell her exactly what she did that led to success—and inspire her to repeat the behavior next time.



**Curiosity**

Sparking your youngster’s curiosity puts her on the road to lifelong learning. Consider these tips for inspiring a sense of wonder.



**Share discoveries**

Create a “Curiosity Zone” to show your child that you can be curious and learn at any age. Hang up a bulletin board or blank poster board, and place index cards, pushpins, and a pencil nearby. Encourage family members to post interesting facts they discover, such as “Lightning is hotter than the sun” or “It’s impossible to divide zero by zero.” Your youngster will be excited to add new facts and to stop by the zone to see what others added. Also, post questions. If someone knows the answer, she can write it on the card. Otherwise, suggest that your child research the topic online, in books, or by asking someone who might know the answer.

**Explore further**

Look for ways to build on what your youngster is studying in school. Visit a history museum when he studies Colonial times. Check out library books on science topics he’s exploring like plants or magnets. If he learns about landmarks around the world, suggest that he draw pictures of them or use blocks to build models. He’ll add to his background knowledge—and see that chances to learn are all around!



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