

# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

October 2017



## SHORT NOTES

### Speak clearly

To boost your child's communication skills, let her introduce herself when she meets people rather than doing it for her. Also, encourage her to be clear and specific when asking for help. If she says, "I can't do this," you might respond, "What are you asking for help with?"

### Rested and ready

When your youngster wakes up easily and feels ready to start the day, that's a good sign he's getting enough sleep. But if he's too groggy in the morning or he's sleepy in school, try slowly adjusting his bedtime until he feels alert in class. *Note:* Experts recommend 10–11 hours of sleep per night at this age.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Repetition helps your child's brain form new connections. Say she wants to improve her soccer dribbling skills. She might practice for a certain number of minutes every day. Or if she'd like to learn origami, she could check out a library book on the topic and work on her favorite designs.

### Worth quoting

"The whole world opened to me when I learned to read." *Mary McLeod Bethune*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** Why did the elephant paint himself different colors?



**A:** So he could hide in the crayon box!

## Consequences that work

Matthew was supposed to put away his toys and games, but he didn't. So when his mom tripped over a block, she thought carefully about what an appropriate consequence for him might be. Consider the following ideas to set consequences that encourage your youngster to listen and follow rules.

### Make it logical

A consequence should relate to the situation at hand and promote the behavior you want. If your child, like Matthew, doesn't put his things away, you might say he has to store them away for a period of time. Living without them may make cleaning up more important to him.

### Keep it reasonable

Take into account your youngster's age and stage of development. A little one may lose screen time for a day if he won't turn off the TV when you ask him to. An older child might have to go



without electronics for a week if you see him posting on a social media site he's not allowed to use.

### Allow natural outcomes

Let your youngster learn from what happens naturally. Say he wants to wear his school T-shirt on Spirit Day, but he didn't put it in the hamper. The result? He will need to wear something else. Or if he forgets his trumpet on band day, he won't be able to play his instrument with the rest of the class.♥

## Attention! Attention!

Staying focused during class will help your child do her best work. Here are strategies that can make a difference.

**Role play.** Pretend you're the teacher, and have your youngster show you what a student who is paying attention looks like. She might sit quietly with her eyes focused on you.

**Stretch attention span.** Suggest that your child do activities that require concentration. Examples include putting together jigsaw puzzles or building a house of cards.

**Remove distractions.** Encourage her to keep only what she needs on her desk. For instance, she should put away art supplies during a social studies lesson.

*Note:* If your youngster has trouble focusing at home, ask her teacher how well she focuses during school. The teacher can share what she notices and offer advice.♥



# Pumpkin power

What's orange and round and full of opportunities to learn? A pumpkin! Your child can try these activities.

## Math

Have your youngster estimate how many "stripes" (ridges) are on a pumpkin and count to see how close she came. She could paint each stripe as she counts it, switching colors to create a pattern. The colors will help her keep track of the number of stripes—and she'll have a pretty pumpkin to display!



## Writing

Suggest that your child design a brochure for an imaginary pumpkin festival. Encourage her to give her festival a name and describe features, such as mini-pumpkin hunts, pumpkin catapults, or hayrides.

## Science

Your youngster may be surprised to discover that pumpkins float. Let her try making boats out of them. She could start with a whole-pumpkin boat (cut off the top and scrape out the insides). Then, help her carve boats of different sizes and shapes, perhaps deep and wide or shallow and narrow. How does the design affect whether they float or sink?♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER



## "Sticky" vocabulary

Play this game with your youngster to help him learn vocabulary words.

**Materials:** marker, craft sticks, cup, dictionary or textbook

Let your child write each vocabulary word (or boldface word from a textbook) on the end of a craft stick. On three



more sticks, he should draw "frowny faces" instead of writing words. When he's finished, have him place all the sticks in a cup, printed ends down.

Take turns pulling out a stick and using the word in a sentence that makes its definition clear. Check the dictionary or textbook—if you're right, keep the stick. If not, return it to the cup. But be careful: Draw a frowny face and you lose all your sticks! (Set each frowny face aside after it's drawn.)

When all sticks have been claimed, the player with the most wins.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

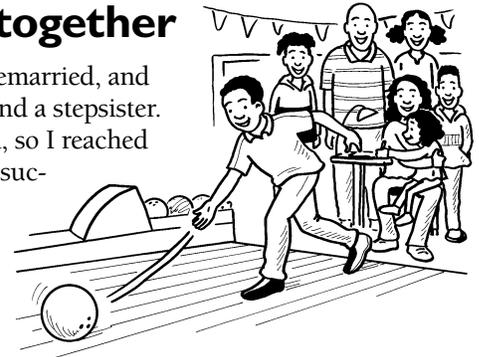
### Blending together

I recently got remarried, and my children now have a stepbrother and a stepsister. My husband and I want us all to bond, so I reached out to a coworker to see how she had successfully blended her new family.

Nancy recommended that we find pastimes everyone can enjoy together. That way, the children will get to know each other in a more relaxed way. We asked the kids for ideas, and they thought of bowling, skating, and playing board games.

My friend also mentioned the importance of respecting each other's space and belongings. So my husband and I made sure to talk to our kids about knocking before entering each other's rooms and asking for permission before borrowing items.

For now, we're taking one day at a time. Recently, we went bowling and had some good laughs. Feeling like a family may not happen overnight, but at least we're on our way.♥



## Q & A Healthy after-school snacks

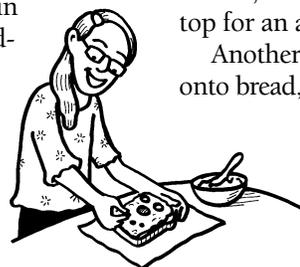
**Q:** My daughter is hungry after school, but it's hard to come up with nutritious snacks that she's excited about eating. Any recommendations?

**A:** Add a fun twist to healthy sandwiches by presenting them in a whole new way. Try a sandwich-on-a-stick, for example. Help your child cut whole-grain bread and cooked turkey into small pieces. Then, she can thread them onto a toothpick or bamboo

skewer along with cheese cubes and cucumber slices.

Or core an apple and slice it into rounds. Let her spread peanut or sunflower butter on one slice, sprinkle with raisins, and place a second apple slice on top for an apple sandwich.

Another idea is to scoop tuna salad onto bread, and your daughter can create a smiley face on top. She might use sliced green olives as eyes, a grape tomato for the nose, and chickpeas for the smile.♥



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### CONNECTION®

November 2017



#### SHORT NOTES

##### Practice patience

Patience is a lifelong skill that will help your youngster in school—and in life. The key is knowing how to pass time pleasantly while waiting so he doesn't feel anxious or frustrated. Together, come up with special "waiting activities" like saying the alphabet backward or counting down with the crosswalk sign.

##### A future job

Help your child make the connection between school and the career she could have someday. Point out workers using school subjects like a nurse writing on a chart or a TV weather forecaster describing a cold front. Also, friends and relatives might tell your child what they studied in school and how it's related to their jobs.

##### See that illustration?

Understanding the meaning of images in books, magazines, and newspapers will boost your youngster's reading comprehension. To build *visual literacy*, ask your youngster to explain what's happening in illustrations and graphics. He might even enjoy making up his own captions.

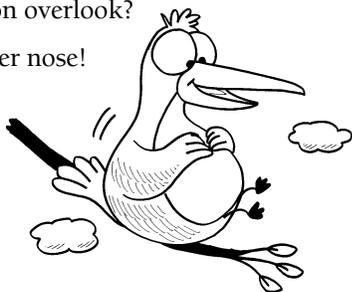
##### Worth quoting

"Adventure is worthwhile in itself."  
Amelia Earhart

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What does even the most careful person overlook?

**A:** Her nose!



## Doing my own homework

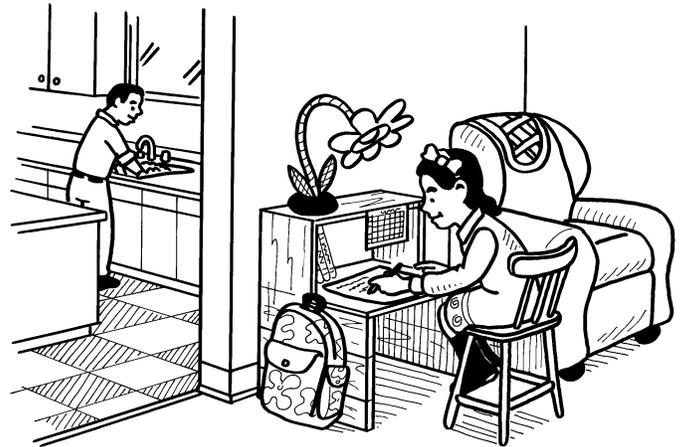
When your child is the one responsible for her homework, she will form good habits that will benefit her throughout her school career. Use these tips to help your youngster be independent at homework time.

**Your child's job:** Let her choose a usual place and time for homework. That will make her more likely to stick with her routine.

She may want to work at the kitchen table after school or at her desk after dinner.

**How to help:** Make sure your family's evening activities don't interfere with homework time. From time to time, ask your youngster whether she needs more supplies, such as pencils, erasers, markers, or glue.

**Your child's job:** She should tackle homework on her own. Not only will this help her learn, it will also show the teacher how well she understands the material.



**How to help:** If your youngster gets stuck, suggest that she reread the directions or look for similar examples in her book. Offer to play study games with her. Also, check to see that her homework is finished.

**Your child's job:** It's up to her to hand in completed work. She can find a way to remind herself, maybe by posting a note on her backpack.

**How to help:** Together, choose a visible spot to keep her backpack and anything else she needs for school. ♥

## An attitude of gratitude

Around Thanksgiving, people often talk about what they're thankful for. These activities can inspire your youngster to express gratitude now—and all year long.

**On the calendar.** Brainstorm categories of things to be grateful for, such as people and nature. On a calendar, list one category per day for a week. Then each day, have family members name something they're grateful for in that category (a healthy grandparent, a beautiful fall day).

**Behind the gift.** When your child receives a gift, ask him to think about what the giver put into it. For instance, if his aunt sends him a sweater that he doesn't like, he might say it was nice that she took the time to find out what style is popular with kids his age. ♥



# Be a good school citizen

Your child can make his school a better place to learn and play by following school rules and being considerate of his fellow students. Encourage him to be a good school citizen with these ideas.



## Follow rules

Have your youngster name school rules, and discuss what would happen if they didn't exist. What if no one had assigned seats? (People might waste time deciding where to sit.) What if students could run in the hallways? (They might get hurt.) He'll see why it's important to follow the rules—just like people must obey laws.

group and listened to others without interrupting.

## Do your part

Every school citizen has an important role to play, and helping teachers and classmates is a part of that role. Suggest that your youngster draw himself doing classroom jobs like feeding the class guinea pig or delivering papers to the office.♥

## Be considerate

Part of good citizenship is treating others the way you want to be treated. Ask your child to share examples of considerate things he did today. Maybe he got off a playground swing so another student could have a turn. Or perhaps he waited quietly before speaking up in a



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Sparking curiosity

My daughter Hailey used to be curious about everything from whether butterflies dream to why she has curly hair. As she grew older, she didn't ask as many questions. I wanted to keep her curiosity alive—so I decided to start asking *her* questions.

For example, when we saw ants carrying big leaves, I wondered aloud how they can hold stuff that's bigger than they are. Hailey looked it up, and she was proud to teach me that ants' muscles are thicker than ours compared to their body size. And these muscles don't have to support much body weight, freeing them up to hold other things.

Hailey enjoys telling me facts I don't know. We are both learning new things, and she's discovering that you're never too old to be curious and ask questions!♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Design a city

If your youngster could create her own city, what would it look like? Suggest that she pretend to be an urban planner. She'll use thinking, planning, math, and engineering skills as she follows these steps.



- 1. Pick a location.** Have your child decide where her city will be located. It could be near an ocean, in a desert, or even in outer space.
- 2. Add services.** Encourage her to consider where people will live, work, grow food, and spend free time. Also, how would they get around? They might travel by car, subway, bike, hovercraft, spaceship—or use an entirely new form of transportation.
- 3. Make a plan.** Let her draw a map of her city, revising it until she's satisfied.
- 4. Build and play.** Suggest that your youngster make a model using household materials (construction paper, empty boxes, paper towel tubes, plastic cups, string). She can see how her city functions by adding toy people, animals, and vehicles.♥

## Q & A

### A successful parent-teacher conference

**Q:** *I'm attending the parent-teacher conference for my son this month. How can I get the most out of it?*

**A:** First, write down what you want to say before you go. List any questions you have. Also, include information to help the teacher learn more about your child, such as the kinds of books he reads or activities he's involved in.

Then, be sure to arrive on time, and set a friendly tone by mentioning something

your son likes about school. *Example:* "Dylan loves science. He especially enjoyed learning about polar bears."

Listen closely to find out where your youngster is doing well or where he needs to improve. Ask how to support his learning at home—perhaps by helping him review math facts.

Finally, agree on how to follow up throughout the school year so you can stay connected and help your child do his best.♥



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December 2017



#### SHORT NOTES

##### “I heard that!”

Good listening skills will help your child do well in every subject. Here's an active way to practice. Choose a common word (*also*, *because*), and read a newspaper or magazine article aloud to her. She has to listen closely for the word—and do a jumping jack each time she hears it.

##### The importance of loyalty

It may seem easier for your youngster to stay quiet when others say unkind things about a friend. But explain that speaking up shows loyalty, and it's the right thing to do. Help him brainstorm what to say, such as “That would really hurt his feelings” or “You'd be upset if someone said that about you.”

##### Let's wash our hands

Hand washing is one of the best ways for your child to stay healthy—and to avoid spreading germs. She could make a poster by writing and illustrating the steps: 1. Wet. 2. Lather. 3. Rub 30 seconds. 4. Rinse. 5. Dry. Have her hang her poster in the bathroom to remind herself, and other family members, to wash properly.

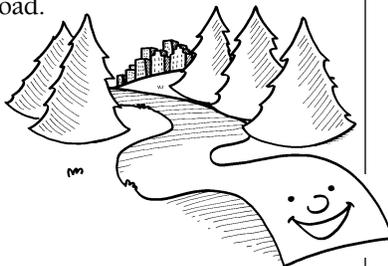
##### Worth quoting

“A problem is a chance for you to do your best.” Duke Ellington

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What goes through towns and over hills but doesn't move?

**A:** A road.



## Winter reading

Does your youngster prefer to read alone, with family members, or in the company of friends? With these ideas, he can do all three this winter.

##### Choose themes

Encourage your child to read more by coming up with wintry themes for choosing books. For example, he might name “ice-skating” or “penguins” and pick out a biography of an Olympic skater or an adventure tale set in Antarctica. After he finishes each book, he can write the title on a paper snowflake and tape it to a wall. How many snowflakes can he hang up?

##### Discuss poetry

On a snowy day—or any day—read winter poetry together. Get a volume like *It's Snowing! It's Snowing!* (Jack Prelutsky) or *Winter Bees & Other Poems of the Cold* (Joyce Sidman). Boost your youngster's reading comprehension by talking about the poets' word choices.



Why did Prelutsky write “the air is a silvery blur”? What did Sidman mean by “the sun's pale wafer”?

##### Read with friends

Your child can see friends over winter break and practice reading at the same time by forming a book club. They might pick a chapter book to read, then meet to discuss it and enjoy a related snack, craft, or game. Or they could each bring a different picture book and take turns reading aloud. *Idea:* Suggest that they keep their club going all year long!♥

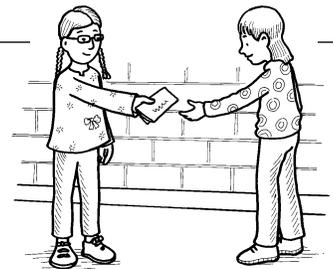
## Coping with stress

Whether your child is stressed about a test or worried about a disagreement with a friend, try these strategies for helping her cope.

● **Name it.** Have her say what, specifically, is making her feel stressed. Maybe she's afraid she'll forget everything she studied or she doesn't know what to say to her friend.

● **Focus on solutions.** Help your youngster think of ways she could relieve some pressure. She might review her study guide one last time the morning of the test or write a note to her friend saying she misses her and wants to play.

● **Think positive.** Remind your child of tests she did well on or ways she resolved problems with friends in the past. Suggest inspiring phrases she could say to herself, such as, “I know I can do it!”♥



# Independent me

The end goal of parenting is to work your way out of a job. You want to teach your youngster to spread her wings and eventually take care of herself. Consider this advice.

**Let her try.** Out of habit, you might do tasks that your child could do for herself. If you've always done her laundry, for instance, you may not realize she's able to do it on her own. Show her the steps, and see how she does with it for a week. If she isn't quite



ready, work alongside her a few more times until she can handle it herself.

**Resist “fixing” it.**

Your youngster probably won't make her sandwich or pack her overnight bag exactly the way you would. But she will feel more independent if she does it her way. If she struggles, offer gentle support. Say she's trying to put a big batch

of leftovers into a small container. You could set out a bigger one, and suggest that she try again.♥

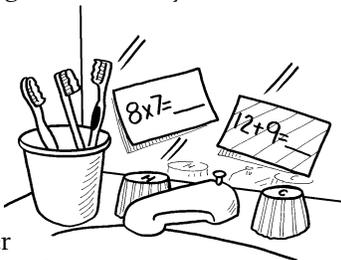
**PARENT TO PARENT**



## Sticky-note math

My sons love games, but it's hard to find ones they can play together that aren't too easy for my older one or too hard for his little brother. At a recent school math night, I discovered a game that's just right for both boys.

First, I wrote 10 addition problems on yellow sticky notes for my younger son and 10 multiplication problems on green sticky notes for my older one. Then, I stuck the notes around the house.



To play, the boys race around to grab one sticky note at a time, show it to me, and say the answer. If they answer correctly, they keep the note. If not, I hold onto it for more practice later. The player with the most notes at the end wins.

My little one was happy that having different problems gave him a fair chance to win—and both boys got a chance to work on the math they're learning.♥

**Q & A**

## Fit volunteering into your schedule

**Q:** I work odd hours, but I still want to pitch in at my daughter's school. What are some options?

**A:** Any time you spend volunteering will help the school and show your child that her education counts.

Get in touch with her teacher about becoming a volunteer. She may have jobs you can do at home, such as stapling together student-made books, or tasks that could be done during the school day like decorating bulletin boards. Don't forget to check with her “specials” teachers, too. A PE teacher may appreciate a hand organizing equipment after school, while a music teacher may love assistance making props for the school musical.

Finally, touch base with the school office and the PTA for other possibilities. They're sure to have ways you can help when your schedule permits.♥



**ACTIVITY CORNER**

## What a memory!

Your child's memory is like a muscle—the more he uses it, the stronger it will be! Here are two fun ways to strengthen his memory of what he hears and sees.

**1. Recall numbers.** Randomly name four numbers, such as 17, 36, 54, and 98. Can your youngster repeat the numbers back to you? Try again with five numbers, then six, and then seven. Talk about what strategies he uses to remember. Maybe he

recites them in his head or relates them to numbers in his life—perhaps your house number is 54 or your phone number ends in 98.

**2. Remember details.** Together, look at a photograph for one minute. Put it away, and take turns asking each other questions about it. *Examples:* “How many trees are there?” or “Who is wearing a striped shirt?” Try again with a new photo—your child is likely to look more closely this time and recall more specifics.♥



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