



## Q&A How can I help my chatty child learn to listen?

**Q:** Lately, the teacher says my first grader talks all the time—even when she is supposed to be listening or working. She's doing well in school otherwise. What should I do?

**A:** Humans are social creatures, and young children's social outlets have been limited in recent years. It's perfectly natural for your child to want to chat. But in school, it's an instinct she's going to have to learn to control.

The best way to help is to teach your child that there are times and places when people can do some things, and other times and places when those same things are not appropriate. Explain that you're going to play a game called My Time, Your Time. When it's My Time, you get to talk. Your child has to look at you and listen to what you're saying. When it's Your Time, your daughter gets to do the talking and you must listen.

Start by setting the timer for a very short amount of My Time—say 30 seconds. Give lots of praise for success. Then switch roles. Gradually, stretch out the times. Tell your child's teacher what you're doing at home. The teacher could say, "Olivia, it's my time now," when it's time to listen in class.

If you make My Time, Your Time a family tradition, when your child is a teen it will also be a great way to stay connected.



## Parent Quiz

### Are you supporting test-readiness?

Preparation is important for the best results on tests, and there are many ways families can help students prepare to do their best. Are you helping your child get ready for test success? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you write** test dates on a family calendar and help your child schedule time to prepare?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you have** your child spread study sessions out over several days?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you enforce** a regular bedtime that allows your child to be well-rested every school day, not just on test days?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you make** sure your child eats a healthy breakfast and dresses comfortably on test days?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you proclaim** your confidence in your child's ability to do well?

#### How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are supporting your child's best effort on tests. For each *no*, try that idea.

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardour and attended to with diligence."  
—Abigail Adams

## Finish the school year strong

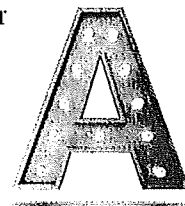
Some students slide into vacation mode weeks before the school year is over. They stop doing their best and start avoiding things that seem challenging. To keep your child focused on learning until the last day:

- **Review past worksheets, quizzes and tests.** Use them to talk about how much your child has learned this year.
- **Connect learning** to your child's interests. If he is choosing a report topic, for example, help him consider what he'd like to learn more about.
- **Set early deadlines.** If a long-term project is due on Wednesday, your child should plan to finish it by Monday. Then he'll have a cushion if a problem arises.

## Hunt for lines of symmetry

When things that are *symmetrical* are divided in half, they are the same on both sides. The dividing line is called the *line of symmetry*.

To help your child discover symmetry, look at letters. Remember that lines of symmetry can be vertical (as in the letter A) or horizontal (as in the letter B). They can even be diagonal.



Sometimes, a figure may have more than one line of symmetry. Write letters on paper and fold them where your child thinks the line of symmetry will be. Do the two sides match?

## Recap the year together

The end of the school year is near. Schedule time with your child to discuss the highlights and look ahead to next year. Ask your child:

- *What was your favorite project this year?*
- *What goals did you accomplish?*
- *What would you like to learn over the summer break?*
- *What excites you about next year? Is there a subject you'd like to improve in?*

### Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

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

Editor: Alison McLean.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

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

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1526-9264

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



MIDDLE SCHOOL

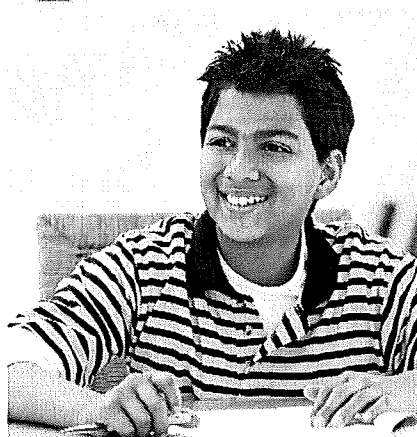
May 2022



## Where is the line between helping and pushing?

**Q:** After some ups and downs as a student, my eighth grader is getting his act together now. I want to be sure his good habits are strongly established before high school. What can I do to keep him on track without pushing too hard?

**A:** You are right that it is important to know when to pull back and let your child take some steps forward on his own. Micromanaging him now could backfire. To help your student continue on a positive path:



- **Acknowledge his effort.** Tell your child how proud you are of the changes he's made. "I can see you are really working hard to turn your assignments in on time. It's terrific that you are being so responsible." He may act like it's no big deal, but your approval likely means a lot to him.
- **Steer clear of backhanded compliments.** When you're praising your child's good habits, don't bring up past bad ones.
- **Provide unspoken support** for your child's new study habits. When he hits the books, do some quiet work or reading of your own. If he's sitting up at his desk instead of sprawling on his bed, be sure his lamp is bright and his pencil cup is well-supplied. If he's planning his time better, give him a big calendar for his wall to help him keep track.

## Parent Quiz

### Are you planning for a safe summer?

Friends and social activity are a high priority for middle schoolers—especially in the summer. Safety is a priority for their parents. Are you ready to help your child socialize safely this summer? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you discuss** COVID precautions with your doctor?
2. **Do you know** your child's friends? Are you in contact with their families? Do you agree on health and safety rules for your children?
3. **Do you ask** about your child's plans before you allow a social outing (what, where, with whom and for how long)?
4. **Have you looked** into organized summer activities for your child, such as camps and volunteering?
5. **Do you research** activities to make sure they are appropriate before your child attends?

#### How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are prioritizing the safety side of social activity. For each *no*, try that idea.

"A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Encourage summer reading

Students who don't read over the summer risk losing some of the skills they've gained this year. To promote daily reading:

- **Set an example.** Let your child see you choosing to read in your free time. Be enthusiastic about reading, even if your middle schooler isn't.
- **Respect changing interests.** Topics your child used to love may not be as captivating these days. Look for books that reflect your child's current interests.
- **Sample some young adult books** yourself. You may get a better feel for what topics may interest your child. Ask a librarian for suggestions.

## Promote civil discussions

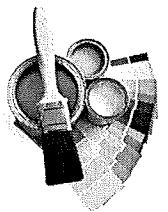
Everywhere today, heated disagreements are dividing people. But respectful disagreement is possible. Teach your middle schooler that in an argument, it is important to:

- **Use a pleasant tone.** Sarcasm and disgust won't win anyone over.
- **Look for common ground.**
- **Back up opinions with facts.**
- **Keep listening to all sides.**

## Bolster parent-child bonds

Studies have shown that despite adolescents' longing for independence, the steady physical presence of their parents has a positive effect on their emotional health. You don't have to do fancy things to connect with your child. This summer:

- **Share** simple activities. Take a walk. Tackle a home-improvement project.
- **Tell** family stories.
- **Show** that time together is a priority for you. Block it out on the calendar.



Source: L. Damour, "What Do Teenagers Want? Potted Plant Parents," *The New York Times*.

## Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

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

Editor: Alison McLean.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute<sup>®</sup>,

a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

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

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1526-9272