

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

Working Together for School Success

September 2011



## SHORT NOTES

### TV solutions

Encourage your youngster to watch less TV without saying a word! First, help him choose a limited number of shows. Then, record them as a “list of favorites.” He can watch the shows, one at a time, and fast-forward through the commercials. Also, be sure to turn the set off when no one’s watching.

### Be a leader

After-school activities can build leadership skills. Check the school website or newsletter, and suggest activities that your child might enjoy. For instance, she could run for student council, serve as a peer counselor, or be a yearbook editor. She’ll gain practice being in charge, which can help her feel comfortable tackling bigger roles as she gets older.

### One-on-one time

Spending time alone with each of your children on a regular basis can help you stay close. For instance, play cards or work on a scrapbook with your older child after the little one is in bed. Or bake cookies with your youngest when your older children are out playing with friends.

### Worth quoting

“Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.”

Daniel J. Boorstin

## JUST FOR FUN

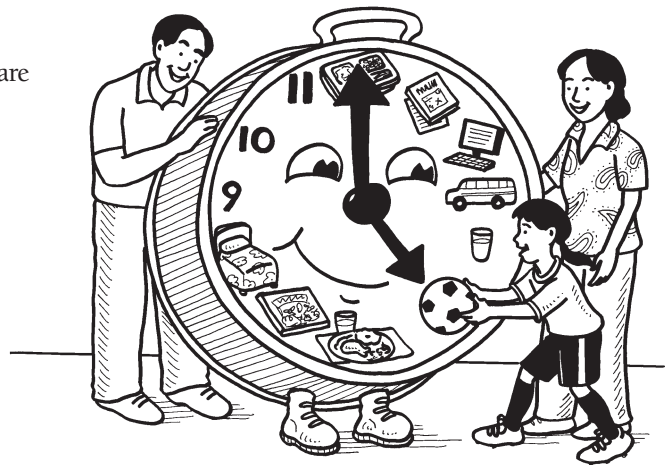
**Q:** Six children were walking under one umbrella. Why didn’t they get wet?

**A:** It wasn’t raining.



## All set for learning

When you ask your child about her day at school or help her prepare for the next day, you teach her that learning is important. She’ll see that success in the classroom begins at home—with family conversations, regular routines, and healthy habits. Try these tips for a great year.



### Talk about school.

Encourage your child to share her accomplishments with you by asking her specific questions. (“What did you make in art?” “Who did you read about in history?”) Or make it a game to discuss the day on your way home—take turns describing something you did, and see how much each person can share before you reach your house.

**Follow a routine.** Create a schedule for your youngster to stick to on school nights. Include time for homework, dinner, playing, reading for pleasure, and relaxing. *Tip:* Ask her teacher how much

homework your child can expect, and help her set aside enough time to finish it. Finally, figure out a bedtime that gives her 9–11 hours of sleep.

**Make attendance a priority.** Let your youngster know that it’s important to be in school every day. Talk about ways she can stay healthy and avoid sick days, like washing her hands regularly and eating a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables. Also, try to schedule doctor appointments and family trips when school isn’t in session. ♥

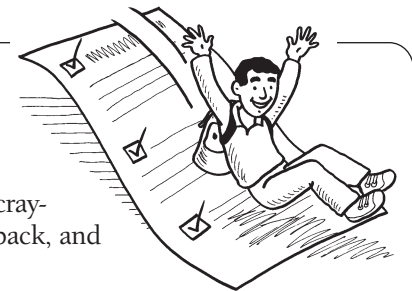
## My checklist

Who is in charge of your youngster’s learning? He is! Share this checklist to help him do his best.

**I arrive ready to learn.** I have the supplies I need (sharpened pencils, eraser, paper, crayons). I have completed homework in my backpack, and I will remember to turn it in.

**I’m a good listener.** I look at my teacher, and I think about what she is saying. I keep my hands and feet to myself, and I am quiet so others can hear.

**I participate in class.** I raise my hand to answer the teacher’s questions. I share my ideas during discussions. ♥



# Strategies for success

There's more to doing well on an assignment than knowing the material. Your child needs to understand the directions, avoid careless mistakes, and look over his work when he's finished. Suggest these ideas.

**1. Read directions carefully.** It might help your child to underline important information



("Use blue to circle the math problems that equal 7") or to say the instructions in his own words ("If the answer is 7, the circle should be blue"). He can also refer back to the directions to make sure he stays on track.

**2. Learn from mistakes.** Encourage your youngster to make a list of his most common errors. ("The first letter in a sentence is uppercase." "The less-than sign points to the smaller number.") He can tape his list in a folder, notebook, or binder so he can consult it as he works.

**3. Double-check.** When your child finishes an assignment, he should reread it to be sure he did his best. He can check subtraction problems ( $15 - 9 = 6$ ) by adding ( $9 + 6 = 15$ ) or use a dictionary to look up words.♥

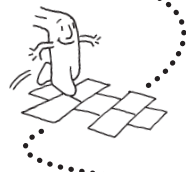
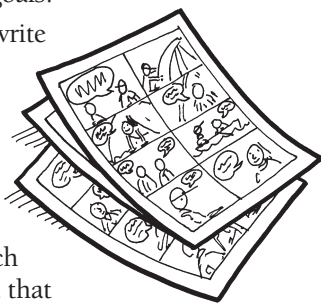
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Starring... me!

On the first day of school, did your child write about her summer vacation? Now encourage her to write at home by creating more stories about her life:

- Have her summarize a special hobby or interest in exactly 10 words. This activity will teach your youngster to get her point across using only the most important words. She can start with as many words as she needs and then cut those that aren't essential. *Example:* "Soccer is fun. I love dribbling, passing, and making goals."

- She could write a story in the format of a graphic novel. These books have comic strip frames on each page. Suggest that your child divide a sheet of paper into four to eight squares. In each, have her draw a different scene from a family activity (camping, crafts). Let her write a sentence to go with each one ("Dad and I pitched a tent") and include dialogue in bubbles above characters' heads ("Listen to the crickets!").♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

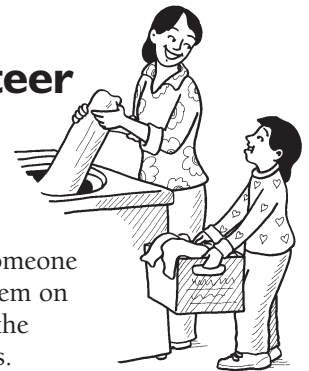
### This year, I'll volunteer

I've always wanted to volunteer at my children's school, but I work during the day and couldn't seem to find time. This year, I emailed the girls' teachers to ask how I could help.

My younger daughter's kindergarten teacher needed someone to take the classroom dress-up clothes home and wash them on a regular basis. She also wanted help collecting items for the science table, so I've sent in pinecones, acorns, and leaves.

For my fifth-grade daughter's teacher, I have been calling parents to find volunteers who will read aloud to the class or help out in the computer lab.

I was surprised to discover how many volunteer opportunities there are for working parents. My girls are proud that I'm helping, and seeing how much the teachers appreciate my help makes me feel good, too.♥



## Q & A Playground fun for everyone

**Q:** My son doesn't like recess. He says he isn't good at jumping rope or climbing on the jungle gym.

*How can I help him feel more confident and enjoy recess more?*

**A:** Recess is important because it provides exercise and gives your child a break from school-work. It's also a good opportunity to build social skills, like starting conversations with other children and working together to

make decisions about what and how to play.

Try visiting playgrounds together to build your son's confidence. Let him practice skills like climbing ladders, sliding down poles, crossing monkey bars, swinging, and kicking and catching a ball.

Also, suggest that he make recess plans ahead of time. In the morning, for example, he might ask a friend to play hopscotch with him on the playground.

Finally, be sure to ask how it's going, and if things don't improve, talk to his teacher.♥



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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ISSN 1540-5621

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

October 2011



#### SHORT NOTES

##### **Humor box**

Help your child create a “humor first aid kit” that she can use to cheer people up. She could collect items that will make others laugh (joke books, comic strips, funny sayings). Suggest that she pull out her kit when a family member is sick, bored, or feeling down.

##### **I’m a lefty!**

If your youngster is left-handed, a few tweaks can make schoolwork easier for him. Be sure he has a supply of left-handed scissors and smudge-free pencils and pens. Also, suggest that he take pages out of a three-ring binder before he writes. His work will be neater, and he’ll be more comfortable.

##### **Join the crowd**

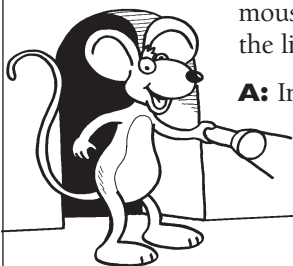
This year, try joining the parent organization (PTA or PTO) at your child’s school. You’ll discover ways to help the school while you get to know other parents, teachers, and staff. Members also get the “inside scoop” on fund-raisers, legislation, and school events.

##### **Worth quoting**

“Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting, and autumn a mosaic of them all.”

Stanley Horowitz

#### JUST FOR FUN

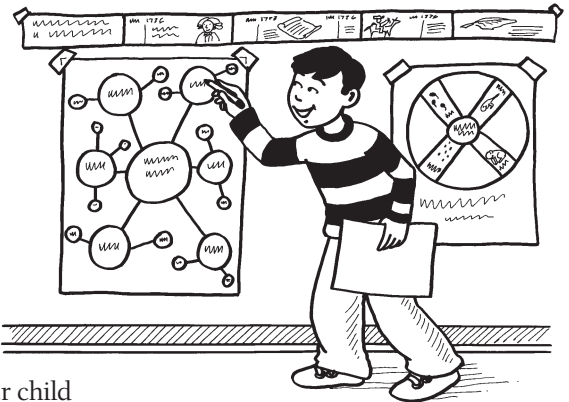


**Q:** Where will the mouse be when the lights go out?

**A:** In the dark.

## Organize and learn

A *graphic organizer* is a special type of drawing that lets your child arrange information that he’s learning. It can show him how ideas are related, and it’s a great tool for studying—just the act of making one will help him remember facts. Suggest that your youngster try graphic organizers like these.



##### **Around and around**

A wheel is an ideal format if your child is studying a cycle, such as seasons of the year or the life of a butterfly or frog. To show a frog’s life cycle, for instance, your youngster would label and illustrate each spoke of the wheel with a stage of frog development (egg, tadpole, frog with tail, adult frog without tail).

##### **Follow the dates**

Time lines let your youngster put story events or historical dates in order. Encourage him to cut sheets of paper in half lengthwise and staple them end to end to make one long strip. Have him write dates and events that he’s studying

(Paul Revere’s ride, the signing of the Declaration of Independence) across each piece and illustrate them. *Tip:* Suggest that he hang his time line on a wall where he can see it.

##### **Wonderful web**

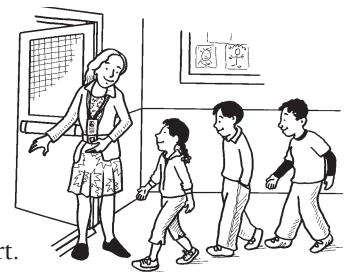
Your child might draw a web to summarize a textbook chapter or to plan an essay. Have him put his topic (Ancient Greece) in a large circle in the middle of his paper. Then, he can draw lines to medium-sized circles and write in categories (government, architecture, sports). Finally, smaller circles branch off for individual facts (“City-states had their own governments”).♥

## Safe at school

Teachers and administrators put a lot of effort into making your youngster’s school a safe place to learn and play. Of course, your child must do her part, too. Here’s how.

- **Follow school rules.** Explain that rules keep students safe. By walking (not running) in the hallway and staying seated on the bus, for example, your youngster will help make sure no one gets hurt.
- **Pay attention during drills.** Listening to her teacher’s instructions during fire drills will help your child be prepared. *Idea:* Let her teach you the drills, and practice them at home.

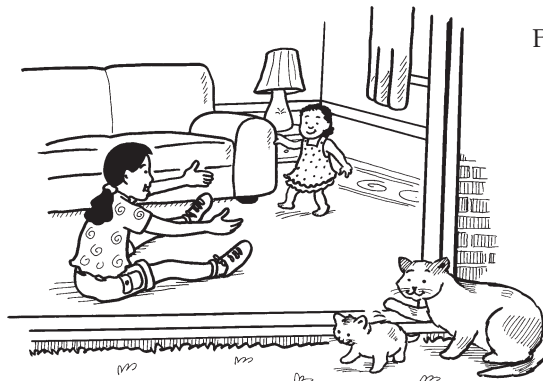
*Note:* Remind your youngster never to go with a person she doesn’t know. Also, she should tell a staff member if she sees an adult at school without a badge.♥



# Self-esteem pointers

How your child feels about herself can affect the way she treats others. It can also determine whether she gives into peer pressure. Boost her self-esteem with these ideas:

- Give specific, honest praise—but don't overdo it. You might simply thank your youngster or let her know you noticed something.



For instance, you could say, “Thanks for cleaning up without being asked.”

- Teach your child to speak up. Explain that it's okay to tell a friend, “I would come over, but I already have plans” or, “I'm not allowed to watch that movie. Let's pick another one.” She'll also learn to accept it when a friend says these things to her. *Tip:* Role-play so she can practice speaking with confidence.

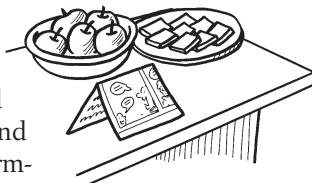
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Party for the planet

An earth-friendly celebration can inspire your whole family to adopt new habits. Help your youngster follow these steps for throwing a “green” party.

**Make recycled invitations.** Suggest that your child cut cardboard panels from snack boxes and cover the printed sides with newspaper comics. On the other sides, he can write party details. (“Go green! Meet in the kitchen Sunday at 2 p.m. to learn how.”)

**Serve locally grown snacks.** You and your youngster can get fruits, vegetables, and local cheeses and jams from a farmers' market or grocery store. Consider adding some of the items to your family's regular diet.



**Play a “green” game.** Think of ways your family can protect the environment (unplug appliances, pick up litter). Write each one on a separate index card. Then, take turns picking a card and illustrating it on paper for others to guess. *Tip:* Try to incorporate the ideas into your daily routines.♥



- Ask your youngster what she feels good about (“I know a lot about animals,” “I helped my little sister learn to walk”). You might suggest that she write these things in a notebook so she can read them if she needs a dose of confidence.♥

### Finding new traditions

Family traditions give your child something to look forward to—and to look back on as he gets older. We asked families to share rituals that keep them close. Here's what they said:

- ♥ “On Sundays we have ‘afternoon tea’ and talk about our plans for the week. We drink iced tea in summer and hot tea with milk during cold weather. It's a great way to relax and catch up.”
- ♥ “Sometimes we invite another family over and ask them to bring photo albums to share. We learn about their experiences and interests, and they learn about ours.”
- ♥ “About once a month, we visit someplace we've never been before. We've discovered a go-kart track, attended a high school hockey game, and checked out a hobby shop. Going to interesting places gives us something to enjoy and talk about together.”♥



### Q & A Reading, reading everywhere

**Q:** My daughter seems to be losing interest in reading for fun. What can I do?

**A:** Ask a librarian to help you choose some books that are popular with children your daughter's age. Once she discovers a series or an author she enjoys, she might be hooked on reading!

Also, surprise her with stories at unexpected times. Carry a book to the playground or on a hike. Read if you stop for a rest or before you pack up to go home. She'll

discover the joy of reading for pleasure in different locations.

Then, try thinking “outside the book.” Encourage your child to read recipes while you cook or instruction manuals as you do home projects. She'll practice reading directions, and she'll learn new words (*edamame, calibrate*).

Finally, look for reading materials when you're out together. For instance, historical markers and store brochures let your youngster read for information. You could encourage her to be “the family reader” and have her read items out loud to everyone.♥



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ISSN 1540-5621