

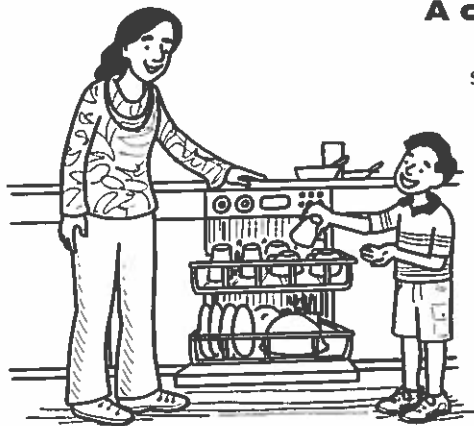
Responsibility Rocks!

Children learn letters, numbers, shapes, and more in hands-on ways. Why not learn responsibility that way, too? From doing chores to keeping promises and owning up to mistakes, here are ways your youngster can become more responsible at home and in school.



Portrait of responsibility

Suggest that your child draw a self-portrait and label parts with her responsibilities. She could write “Listening to my teacher” beside an ear and “Walking my little brother to school safely” near her feet. Draw one of your own, and let her compare the two—she’ll see that you each have different responsibilities.



A chore expert

Give your youngster regular household chores—and allow him to take the lead. Feeling like an expert can motivate him to get the job done and take pride in his work. For instance, he could come

up with a better way to load the dishwasher and then teach everyone his method. Or he might think of a new system for sorting laundry. *Idea:* When you ask about his day at school, have him tell you about classroom jobs he does, like passing out papers or being the line leader.

Responsible for learning

Being a student is your child’s job—and she’s the one in charge of that job! Encourage her to come up with a good system for remembering her responsibilities, such as using a planner or keeping a checklist on her desk. Tasks could include writing down homework assignments, completing assigned reading, studying for tests, being prepared for class discussions, and turning in finished work.

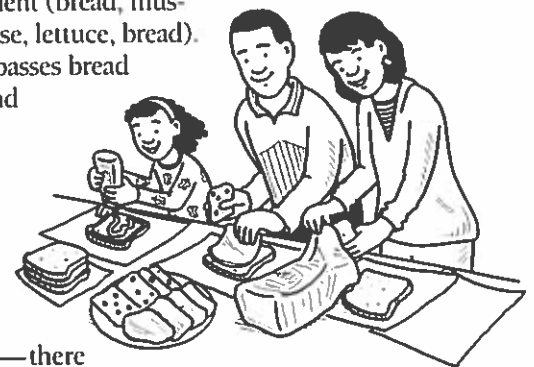
Taking care of property

Let your youngster post signs around the house encouraging family members to be responsible for shared property. He could write and illustrate each one. A sign near art supplies might read “Put caps back on markers and glue sticks so they don’t dry out.” And a sign in the bathroom may say “Wipe up spilled water so no one slips.”

Tip: If you take on an extra responsibility (feeding a vacationing neighbor’s cats, babysitting your cousin’s toddler), invite your youngster to help you so he gets a taste of new responsibilities.

Assembly-line fun

In factories, each assembly-line worker depends on everyone before her to do her own part of the job. Show your youngster how this works by trying out an assembly line at home. You might make sandwiches for a picnic. Assign each person an ingredient (bread, mustard, turkey, cheese, lettuce, bread). The first person passes bread down the line, and everyone adds their ingredients in order. Ask your child what would happen if the person in charge of bread didn’t do her job—there would be no sandwiches!



continued

“I promise” coupons

Explain to your child that when he makes a promise, he’s responsible for keeping it. Encourage him to be a promise keeper with this idea. Let him design coupons promising to do special things for family members. A coupon for his little sister might say “I promise to read you a bedtime story this weekend,” and one for you could read “I promise to clean out the back of the van before our trip.”

Financially savvy

Learning to spend and save responsibly begins early. Your youngster will need to weigh needs and wants, set priorities, and be patient. If you give her an allowance, or if she receives money for gifts or odd jobs, suggest that she set aside a portion to save. *Idea:* Take a field trip to the bank to open her own savings account.

A dose of accountability

Everyone makes mistakes, but it’s important to take responsibility for them. If your child does something he’s not supposed to, ask how he will be accountable for his actions. Say he misses the bus and you have to drive him to school. Perhaps he can do a chore that you normally do to make up for the time you spent driving. Or if he doesn’t finish his work in class, he may need to complete it at home instead of playing with friends.

Earning privileges

With privileges come responsibilities. This game shows your youngster how they’re related. Get a dozen index cards, and give half to her. Ask her to write a privilege she enjoys on



Tip: When possible, use words like *capable* and *dependable* while talking to or about your child. You could say, “I can always depend on you to...” or “Julie is very capable of...”

each card, such as deciding which learning centers to use in class or having a friend sleep over. On each of your cards, write a responsibility to match a privilege she chose (following classroom rules, going to bed on time). Put the cards facedown in rows, and take turns flipping over two cards and reading them. If the privilege matches the responsibility, keep the pair. If not, return them to their spots. Collect the most matches to win.

Our earth is for everyone

Your child isn’t too young to start taking responsibility for the planet! Encourage him to make an events calendar of earth-friendly activities. He might pencil in an Earth Day celebration that he read about on a flyer. Or he could plan a household “energy checkup” where family members brainstorm ways to use less power. He’ll feel proud to check off each item that he accomplishes.



Responsible on the Internet

Kids in today’s world must learn to behave responsibly online. Consider creating a contract with your child that outlines responsible online behavior. Include guidelines like telling you about any inappropriate messages or posts she receives, keeping personal information private (name, age, school), and visiting only websites you have approved. You should both sign the contract, and hang it by the computer.



Parent Support = Student Success

Experts agree: Showing support at home for your youngster's education leads to success in school and a good attitude toward learning. Here are important ways you can motivate your child to do well.



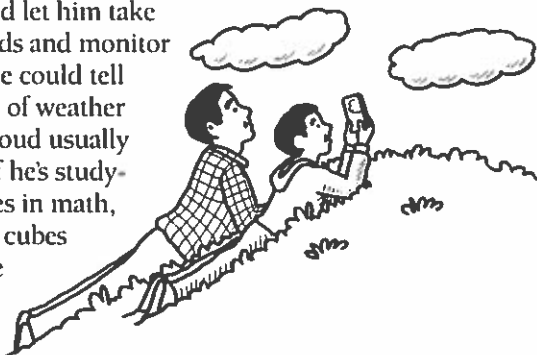
Talk about learning

Check backpacks

Taking an interest in what your youngster is learning at school shows him that you believe education is important. His backpack is full of clues. Go through it together, and look over papers and books he brings home. Focus on learning, while also keeping an eye on grades he's receiving. For example, ask him to read a poem he wrote or to explain how he solved a math problem. *Note:* Be sure to sign any required paperwork, and have him return it to his bag so he can hand it in on time.

Find real-world connections

Whether you're at home or out and about, look for activities that let your child make real-life connections to what he's studying in school. Say he's doing a weather unit in science. Go outside, and let him take photos of clouds and monitor the weather. He could tell you what kind of weather each type of cloud usually indicates. Or if he's studying solid shapes in math, see how many cubes and spheres he can spot on a walk.



Support homework

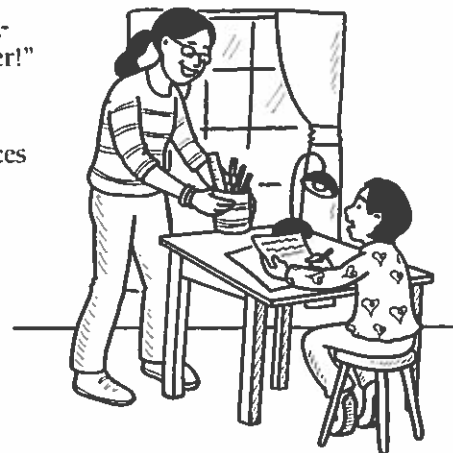
Be a resource

Ask your youngster to explain homework assignments to you. This will help her remember and focus on what to

do—plus, homework is a great springboard for discussions about school. If she gets stuck while she's working, ask questions to get her unstuck, rather than telling her the answers. Try: "Is there an example in your textbook that might give you a clue?" Also, check to make sure her homework is done each day, but don't correct it. Her teacher needs to see mistakes to find out what your child doesn't understand or where she needs extra help. Finally, when she studies for a test, offer to quiz her.

Set the stage

Show the entire family that homework is a priority. Together, find a spot away from distractions like the TV or siblings. It should have good lighting and be stocked with supplies (paper, pencils, calculator, dictionary). Then, let your youngster decorate a sign that says "Homework in progress. Talk to you later!" to post when she's working. *Tip:* Make sure electronic devices are silenced or in another room. If your child uses a device for homework, she should close unrelated windows and apps.





Create routines

Read aloud daily

Reading aloud to your youngster for at least 20 minutes every day is one of the most important keys to his success. Many parents read bedtime stories, but you could also read a wake-up story in the morning, hold a family read-aloud after dinner, and carry books in the car to read on the go. Choose a variety of reading materials, including fiction, nonfiction, children's magazines, and poetry.

Plan a healthy lifestyle

Routines that keep your child healthy also support academic achievement. If he is well rested, he'll be more likely to arrive at school ready to learn, so make sure he gets 9–11 hours of sleep. And good nutrition will give him the energy he needs to focus in class. Have him start each day with a healthy breakfast at home or in school. Regular physical activity—at least an hour a day—promotes good health, too. Take family bike rides, shoot baskets together at a playground, and set an example by regularly exercising yourself.

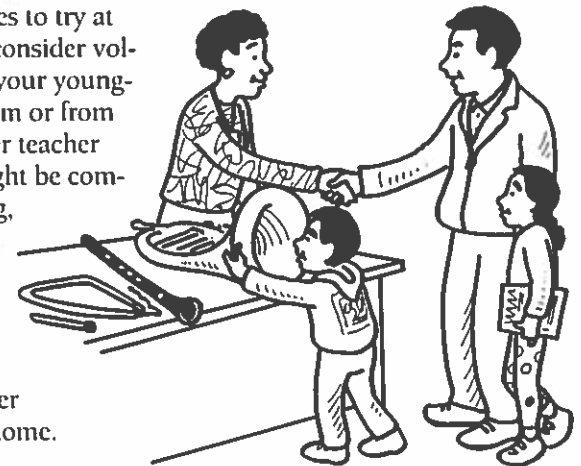
Communicate with the school

Stay in contact

Parent-teacher conferences allow you to sit down one-on-one with the teacher and talk about how to support your child's education. You can stay in touch between conferences, too, by sending notes or emails. If you have a concern about your youngster, ask for a time to meet or talk on the phone. *Tip:* It's nice to contact the teacher when things are going well, too. Sending a note about a classroom activity your child enjoyed or a positive comment she made about school is a good way to maintain a strong relationship.

Participate in events

Attend literacy nights, PTA or PTO meetings, math fairs, and special events to get to know school staff and learn information that can help you help your youngster. Introduce yourself to the media specialist, the school counselor, and the music teacher. Take notes about activities to try at home. Also, consider volunteering in your youngster's classroom or from home. Tell her teacher what you might be comfortable doing, such as reading one-on-one with students or making learning center materials at home.



The power of expectations

Children pick up on what parents expect from them—and they're likely to rise to the occasion. Try these suggestions for setting and communicating high, but reasonable, expectations for your youngster.

- **State your expectations.** You can be direct ("I expect you to finish homework before you get screen time") or indirect ("When you graduate from high school and go to college..."). Communicate your expectations regularly so your child knows them.
- **Be realistic.** Your youngster will be more apt to meet expectations if they're within her reach. Say several of her report



card grades dropped. It may be more reasonable to expect her to bring them up by one letter grade rather than two.

- **Make attendance a priority.** Let your child know that you expect her to attend school all day, every day, unless she's sick or there's a family emergency. Show her that you value attendance by scheduling vacations and, when possible, medical appointments outside of school hours.

Note: If you have more than one child, try to communicate high expectations suited to each of them.

Home & School CONNECTION®

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