



STORY IDEAS

Thinking of ideas for creative writing is one of the hardest parts for many writers. In each *Help at Home Kit*, we will offer 20 or more ideas for story starters. Your child (student) should be encouraged to use the story starter as the initial idea for his/her creative writing.

1. Have the child jot down 3-6 ideas that could be part of the story (correct spelling is not necessary)
 2. Select 2 favorite ideas
 3. Use the following pattern until the child is comfortable in writing a story:
 - a. A topic sentence
 - b. 3-6 sentences that support the topic sentence (depending on age)
-
1. Three goals I have set for myself are...
 2. Wow! That is one day I'd really like to forget.
 3. The best April Fools' Day joke...
 4. I thought it was a tomato that I planted, but it turned out to be a...
 5. I've always wondered why people do this:
 6. I was really disappointed when...
 7. Please! Don't make me wear that.
 8. But mom, it followed me home. Can I keep it?
 9. The broken window
 10. How can I tell them that I lost my...
 11. Where did all these snakes come from?
 12. I wish I had listened to him.
 13. I'm special because...
 14. I wish I could work at (name of store) at the mall because...
 15. Next summer I'm going to...
 16. I was so embarrassed when...
 17. If elected, I promise to...
 18. Why is everyone looking at me?
 19. But you promised...
 20. The rescue
 21. That was the best concert I ever attended.
 22. You mean there really are vampires?
 23. I don't want to move to ...
 24. It's all happening at the zoo.

TITLE 1 Parent's ALMANAC

Use these dates to spark discussions with your child(ren). You and they might think of an art project, school report, or creative writing about one of these topics.

MARCH

Monthly Observances

Women History Month	Youth Art Month
American Red Cross Month	National Craft Month
Music in Schools Month	National Nutrition Month

Week-long Observances

Girl Scout Week	Poison Prevention Week
Teen Tech Week	Newspaper in Education Week
Iditarod Race	

- 1 – World Book Day, Ohio and Nebraska Became States, National Pig Day, Peace Corps Birthday
- 2 – Dr. Seuss Born (Read Across America), Texas Declares Independence From Mexico
- 3 – National Anthem Day, Alexander Graham Bell Born, Florida Became a State
- 4 – Vermont Became a State, U.S. Constitution Went Into Effect
- 5 – Boston Massacre, Stapler Invented, G. Mercator (mapmaker) born
- 6 – Michelangelo Born, Alamo Falls
- 7 – Telephone Patented, iPod Patented, Luther Burbank Born
- 8 – International Women's Day, Plant a Flower Day,
- 9 – Barbie Doll Introduced, Amerigo Vespucci Born
- 10 – Harriet Tubman Day, 1st U.S. Paper Money Issued
- 11 – Daylight Savings Time Begins, Johnny Appleseed Day, Ezra Jack Keats Born
- 12 – Girl Scout Day, Genealogy Day
- 13 – Deaf History Month Begins, Uncle Sam Born
- 14 – Pi Day, Albert Einstein Born, Cotton Gin Patented
- 15 – Maine Became a State, Julius Caesar Murdered (Ides of March)
- 16 – West Point Founded, Barnum & Bailey Circus Started, First Liquid Fueled Rocket
- 17 – St. Patrick's Day, Campfire Girls Day, Quilting Day
- 18 – Pres. Grover Cleveland Born, First Space Walk, Sparky the Firedog Born
- 19 – Daylight Savings Law Passed, Swallows return to San Juan Capistrano
- 20 – Spring Begins (2009), Big Bird Born, Mr. Rogers Born
- 21 – World Poetry Day, Johann Sebastian Bach Born
- 22 – Stamp Act Passes in England, World Water day
- 23 – Louis and Clark Expedition Begins, Florida Discovered and named, Patrick Henry's Speech
- 24 – Harry Houdini Born, World Tuberculosis Day
- 25 – Medal of Honor Day, National Family Day
- 26 – Day of the Seal, Cape Cod Named, Robert Frost Born
- 27 – 1st Fire Engine, Photography Day
- 28 – First Washing Machine Patented
- 29 – Coca Cola Invented
- 30 – Alaska Purchased From Russia, Vincent Van Gogh Born, Doctors' Day
- 31 – Eiffel Tower Opens, Bunsen Burner Day

APRIL

Monthly Observances

National Poetry Month	Autism Awareness Month
National Humor Month	National Child Abuse Month
School Library Month	National Poetry Month
Keep America Beautiful Month	Pet First Aid Month

Week-long Observances

National Library Week	Golden Rule Week
National Park Week	Administrative Professionals Week
National Volunteer Week	Week of the Young Child

- 1 – April Fool’s Day, Apple Computer Founded, Palm Sunday
- 2 – Hans Christian Andersen Born, International Children’s Book Day, Peanut Butter and Jelly Day
- 3 – Pony Express Began, Jane Goodall Born
- 4 – Vitamin E Discovered, Martin L. King Jr. Assassinated
- 5 – Booker T. Washington Born, Pocahontas Married John Rolfe
- 6 – North Pole First Reached, First Modern Olympics, Good Friday, Passover Begins at Sundown
- 7 – World Health Day, World Health Organization Founded
- 8 – The Buddha’s Birthday, Easter Sunday
- 9 – Winston Churchill Day, 1st U.S. Public Library, Civil War Ended
- 10 – Safety Pin Patented, Encourage a Young Writer Day
- 11 – Civil Rights Act, Jackie Robinson becomes the 1st Black Major League Ball Player
- 12 – Civil War Began, 1st Space Shuttle Launch, Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Day
- 13 – Thomas Jefferson Born
- 14 – Pan American Day, Abraham Lincoln Assassinated, Noah Webster published 1st American Dictionary
- 15 – Leonardo da Vinci Born, 1st McDonalds Opens, Titanic Sank
- 16 – Astronomy Day, Wilbur Wright Born, Income Tax Day, Boston Marathon
- 17 – Ellis Island Day, 1st Woman to Fly Around the World
- 18 – Paul Revere’s Ride, San Francisco Earthquake
- 19 – Battle of Lexington and Concord
- 20 – Australia Discovered, First Baseball Game at Fenway Park
- 21 – Rome Founded, Webster Dictionary Published, Secretary’s Day
- 22 – Earth Day, Jelly Bean Day
- 23 – Shakespeare Born, World Book day
- 24 – Astronomy Day, Library of Congress Founded, Spanish American War Began
- 25 – Suez Canal Begun, 1st Seeing Eye Dog
- 26 – Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster, Richter Scale Invented, Audubon Born
- 27 – Arbor Day, President Ulysses S. Grant Born
- 28 – Maryland Became a State, James Monroe Born
- 29 – Zipper Patented, National Dance Day
- 30 – Louisiana Became a State, Vietnam War Ended, Children’s Book Day

DOUBLETS



Lewis Carrol invented Doublets. The object is to change a word into another word by changing one letter at a time to make a real intermediate word.

EX: HAT to VAN

HAT CAT.....CANVAN

BEAR to BULL

BEAR BELL BELT BELLBULL

Try to following:

MILK to PAIL

WELL to DONE

MICE to RATS

CAMP to SITE

Find more by using GOOGLE and entering "doublets"

MILK MILL PILL PAIL

WELLDELL DOLL DOLE DONE

MICE MITE MATE MATS RATS

CAMP CAME SAME SATE SITE

Checklist for Helping Your Child With Homework*

Show That You Think Education and Homework Are Important

Do you set a regular time every day for homework?

Does your child have the papers, books, pencils and other things needed to do assignments?

Does your child have a well-lit, fairly quiet place to study?

Do you set a good example by showing your child that the skills he is learning are an important part of the things he will do as an adult?

Do you stay in touch with your child's teacher?

Monitor Assignments

Do you know what your child's homework assignments are? How long they should take? How the teacher wants you to be involved in them?

Do you see that your child starts and completes assignments?

Do you read the teacher's comments on assignments that are returned?

Is TV viewing or video game playing cutting into your child's homework time?

Provide Guidance

Do you help your child to get organized? Does your child need a schedule or assignment book? A book bag or backpack and a folder for papers?

Do you encourage your child to develop good study habits (for example, scheduling enough time for big assignments; making up practice tests)?

Do you talk with your child about homework assignments? Does she understand them?

Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems

Do you meet with the teacher early in the year before any problems arise?

If a problem comes up, do you meet with the teacher?

Do you cooperate with the teacher to work out a plan and a schedule to solve homework problems?

Do you follow up with the teacher and with your child to make sure the plan is working?

It's MCAS – HELP



The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) testing begins in March. For many students these high stakes tests can cause great anxiety and stress. Here are some hints to help your child approach these tests in a more relaxed and positive manner.

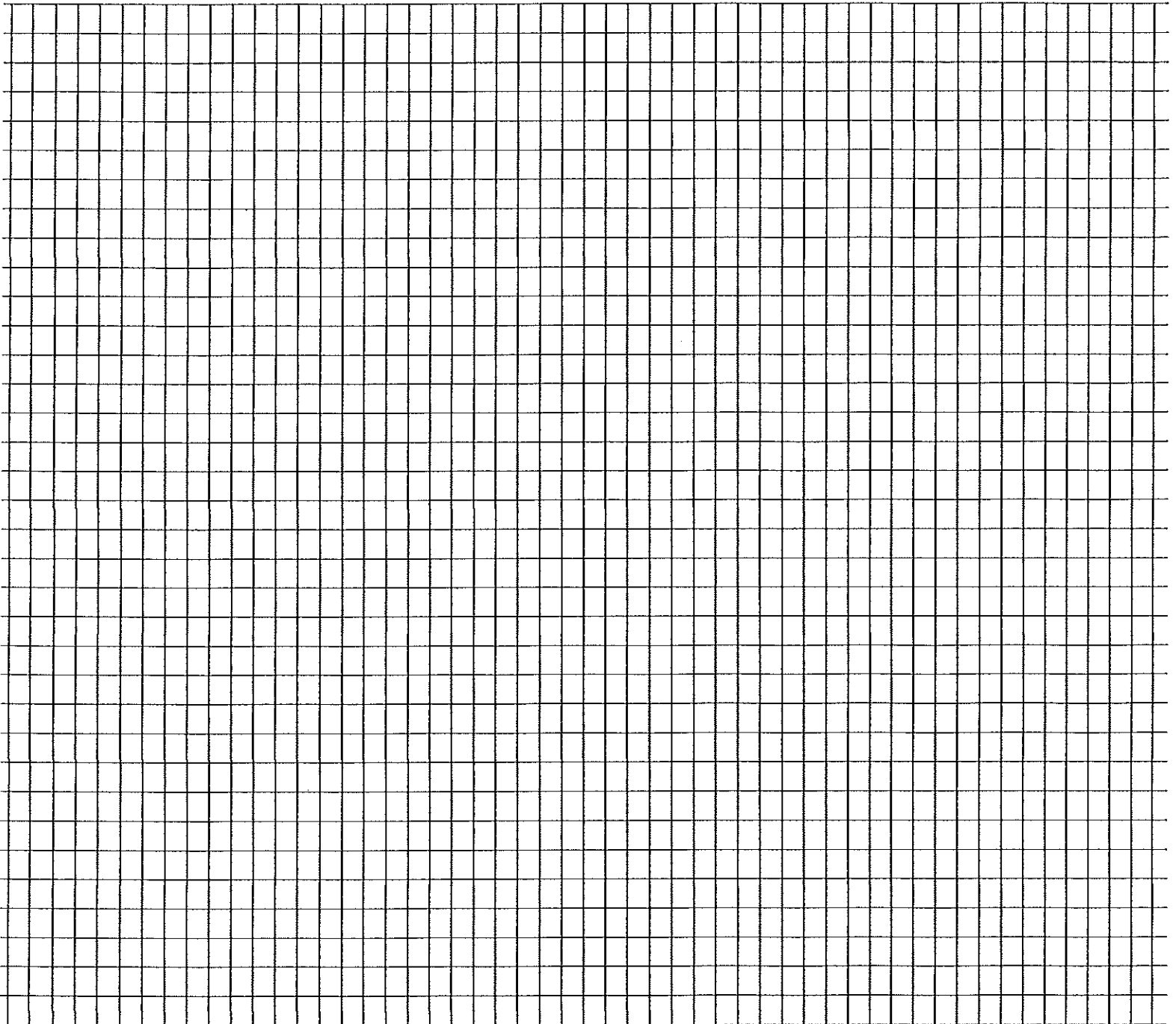
1. Make certain that your child is well rested. To perform at their peak they should get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
2. Serve a good breakfast the days of the test. Your child's brain needs fuel to operate.
3. Remind them to drink water during the day. Proper hydration is very important.
4. Encourage them to exercise regularly. Not only will they feel better, but studies have shown that regular exercise releases hormones that promote better knowledge retention.
5. Have them practice increasingly long study sessions. The tests require your child to sit for lengthy periods of time. Have them practice concentrating on a task for increasing lengths of time.
6. Build their confidence. Let them know that they can do it and that they will do better each time they try something. Practice does improve performance.
7. Reduce their anxiety. Remind your child that this is a paper and pencil test. It is a tool used by schools to help improve their performance. The schools will use the results to help them get better at their studies.

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood



This activity requires graph paper.

Have your child student make a map of his/her neighborhood. The center of the graph should be their home. Have him/her label the streets, the major landmarks, and points of interest. The map will not need to be drawn to scale but should have a compass indicating North. As an extension, have your child/student draw a map of his/her route to school.





It's a Matter of Time



Many students have a hard time organizing their time and following a schedule. For this activity you will need a calendar.

Use the calendar to find out how many days remain until:

1. Your birthday
2. The Fourth of July
3. Columbus Day
4. New Year's Day
5. The first day of summer
6. Birthdays of members of your family
7. The next school vacation
8. The last day of school

As a variation have your child/student determine how many weeks until the above events.

For older students have them determine how many hours, minutes, or seconds until the above events.



LETS TALK

For many parents having a real conversation with their child is difficult. Too often the dialogue is one sided with the parent directing and the child reacting. As the child grows older, the dialogue may cease to provide any meaningful exchange of information.

Here are some ideas as to how to improve your communication with your teen:

1. Be respectful. You want your teen to respect you – show them the same respect. They will be testing ideas and opinions as they mature and learn more about the world. While you may not agree with everything they say, respect their right to say it.
2. Be aware of their interests and support their explorations. You may not be up to date on the latest music or movies but ask them about the things that interest them and support their wanting to develop interests that are different than yours.
3. Take the time to objectively listen to them. Make certain that every day you spend time talking with them not just at them. Conversations should be a habit not an afterthought. Try to listen twice as much talk.
4. Be available to your teen. Many teens feel that their parents are interested in everything but them.
5. Encourage your teen with both verbal and non-verbal communication. Be an active listener and maintain eye contact, smile, nod, and offered encouragement to your teen as they talk with you. Try to be non-judgmental.
6. Respect their privacy. There are some things they will not want to talk about. They are gaining independence and need to feel that they have some control over what they share with you.
7. Use the 4 to 1 rule. Say 4 positive comments to every negative one.

Map It



This activity requires a computer and a printer.

Using a map and finding directions are important life skills for your students/child. Use the following directions to create maps and allow practice in using maps and finding directions.

The major map programs on the web are (maps.google.com) (maps.yahoo.com), (mapquest.com), and (randmcnally.com). Choose one of the web sites and try the following activities.

1. Create a map of your home neighborhood
2. Create a map of the streets around your school.
3. Get directions from your house to the following Massachusetts landmarks:

The Statehouse in Boston

Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, MA

Old Ironsides in Charlestown, MA

Fenway Park

Boston Garden

Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, MA

Museum of Science, Boston

Lowell National Historical Park

4. Use a local map of your neighborhood and find the nearest:

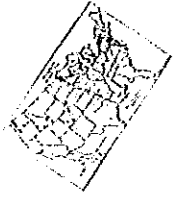
School

Drug store

Grocery store

Fire Station

Post office



MIXED UP STATES

Each of the following scrambled letter groups is the name of one of the states in the US.

aiignrv

aaeuchmsssstt

eoknrwy

eomnrtv

aeiignrstvw

aaioclnr

aetsx

aeioggr

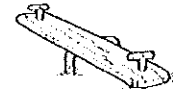
aoiw

aiodflr

Virginia Massachusetts New York Vermont West Virginia California Texas Georgia Iowa
Florida

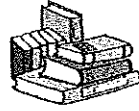


Playground Safety



As the weather warms up, your students/children will be more likely to spend time on the school or park playground. Playgrounds are great places for children to make friends, get exercise, and develop athletic skills. Here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help ensure that they have a safe experience.

1. Make certain that the equipment is properly installed and that all the parts are working
2. Make certain that your child uses equipment that is the right size for them.
3. Are any parts that might pinch fingers or catch clothes out of your child's reach?
4. Look at the material under the equipment. Will it help absorb impact if your child falls?
5. Check wooden equipment for splinters, nails, and screws that might injure your child.
6. If the equipment has a platform, does it have guardrails to prevent falls?
7. Are there any places where a head, hand, or foot might get caught?
8. If the equipment has large metal surfaces, check them to make certain that the surface is not hot enough to cause a burn.
9. Make certain that there are no rocks, sticks, or other dangerous objects under or near the equipment.
10. Check to make certain that the equipment is anchored properly and can not fall over.
11. Remind your student/child to keep out of the way of other children and to keep a safe distance from the swings and slides.
12. If the playground has a teeter-totter, make certain that your student/child stays clear of the up-swings of the ends.
14. Remind your students/children that they are there to have fun and to share the equipment. Too many fights have resulted from "hogging" equipment. They need to learn to wait, take turns, and watch out for smaller children.



Reading All Around

We are surrounded by print. Everywhere we look there are letters, words, and sentences. In this activity students are asked to find a reading activity or print source for every letter of the alphabet.

a atlas

b

c

d

e

f

g

h help wanted ads

i

j

k

l

m

n

o

p

q quizzes

r

s

t

u

v

w

x

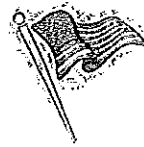
y

z zodiac signs

State Capital Match

Match the states with their capital city:

Alabama	Cheyenne
Alaska	Madison
Arizona	Charleston
Arkansas	Olympia
California	Richmond
Colorado	Hartford
Connecticut	Montpelier
Delaware	Salt Lake City
Florida	Austin
Georgia	Nashville
Hawaii	Pierre
Idaho	Columbia
Iowa	Denver
Illinois	Providence
Indiana	Harrisburg
Kansas	Salem
Kentucky	Oklahoma City
Louisiana	Columbus
Maine	Bismarck
Maryland	Raleigh
Massachusetts	Albany
Michigan	Santa Fe
Minnesota	Trenton
Mississippi	Concord
Missouri	Carson City
Montana	Lincoln
Nebraska	Helena
Nevada	Jefferson City
New Hampshire	Jackson
New Jersey	St. Paul
New Mexico	Lansing
New York	Boston
North Carolina	Annapolis
North Dakota	Augusta
Ohio	Baton Rouge
Oklahoma	Frankfort
Oregon	Topeka
Pennsylvania	Des Moines
Rhode Island	Indianapolis
South Carolina	Springfield
South Dakota	Boise
Tennessee	Honolulu
Texas	Atlanta
Utah	Tallahassee
Vermont	Dover
Virginia	Sacramento
Washington	Little Rock
West Virginia	Phoenix
Wisconsin	Juneau
Wyoming	Montgomery



State Trivia

1. List all the states whose name ends in a vowel:
2. List all the states whose name begins with a vowel:
3. List all the states whose name contains a direction:
4. List all the states whose name contains two letters repeated in order:
5. Which three states have the shortest names?
6. Which states have the longest names?
7. Which state has the name of the state repeated in its capital city?
8. List the eight states whose name begins with the letter M
9. List the states whose capital city contains the word city:

-
1. Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia
 2. Alabama, Arkansas, Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah
 3. North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia
 4. Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee,
 5. Iowa, Ohio, Utah
 6. Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina
 7. Oklahoma – Oklahoma City
 8. Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana
 9. Oklahoma– Oklahoma City, Utah– Salt Lake City, Nevada- Carson City, Missouri – Jefferson City



Test Taking Tips



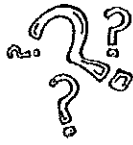
One of the most common types of tests that student will take is the multiple-choice test. Here are some tips that will help improve student performance on this type of test.

1. Make certain that you know and follow the directions exactly.
2. Make certain that you read the whole question first before you look at the answers. Now look at all the possible answers before you make your choice of correct answer.
3. Answer the easiest questions first. If you skip a question, make certain that you skip that answer space on the answer sheet.
4. Don't spend too much time on any one question. You can always come back and answer it later. Make a little mark on your test booklet to remind you that you have skipped that question.
5. Neatness counts – don't make stray marks on your paper – especially if a machine will mark it.
6. If you do not know the answer immediately try the following:
 - a. Cross-out any answer that you know is wrong
 - b. Look for words such as always, never, or other all-encompassing words. Such answers are usually not right
 - c. Long answers are more often correct than short answers
 - d. Guess from the remaining answers – if guessing will not count against you, do not leave any answer unmarked.
7. Be careful of second guessing yourself. Many times students change a correct answer to an incorrect answer. Most often your first idea is correct.
8. If the questions follow a reading selection, use the questions as a guide to understanding the selection.
9. Don't stress if you do not know an answer. No one will get everything right every time.

TV Log

Nationally children spend more than 30 hours a week watching TV. Do you know how much TV your child is watching? The following chart will let you graph the amount of TV your child watches in one week. The chart could also be used to chart the themes your child is watching and the nature of the programming that your child is watching.

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
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10:30							



What Would You Do?

A popular television program is called "What Would You do?" The premise of the program is to create a tricky situation and see how people react to it. You can play "What Would You Do?" with your student/child by asking the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. The topics are designed to promote discussion between you and your child.

1. You see a child being bullied. You do not know the child. What would you do?
2. One of your friends brags to you that he/she has been drinking when his/her parents are not in the house. What would you do?
3. One of your friends is about to fail math unless he/she passes the test. Your friend asks you to help him/her cheat. What would you do?
4. One of your friends doesn't bathe often enough and often has a bad odor. What would you do?
5. You find a \$20 bill on the playground. A student that you don't like tells everyone that he lost some money. What would you do?
6. You see your best friend vandalize school property. What would you do?
7. Your best friend makes you promise not to tell anyone his/her secret. You agree and then find out that the secret is that they plan to hurt themselves. What would you do?
8. You see your best friend shoplift a pack of gum. What would you do?
9. While online, you are accidentally sent an embarrassing email from someone you don't like. What would you do?
10. Your brother/sister is hanging out with some kids that you know are trouble. What would you do?

More Than Books at the Library

By: Colorín Colorado (2008)

In addition to a wealth of books, your library will probably have audio tapes and CDs of books, musical CDs, movies, computers that you can use, and many more resources. You also might find storytelling programs, books in languages other than English, or programs to help adults learn English or improve their reading. If you would like reading help for yourself or your family, check with the librarian about literacy programs in your community.

Supervised Story Time

Babies and toddlers: Many libraries have group story hours that are short and geared to the attention spans of the children. The storyteller also may show you fingerplays and rhythm activities or give you tips and handouts that you can use for your own home story hours.

Preschoolers: Many libraries offer story hours more than once a week where parents and children typically read several books on the same topic. You might play games, sing songs, use puppets, or do other activities that are connected to that topic. You also may get ideas for books to read and other things to do with your child at home.

Families: Families can read together, or they may join in a story told by the library storyteller. Some libraries also set up family activities around the readings, including arts and crafts projects and watching movies.

Youth Programs and Homework Help

For elementary school children, there are variations of the read-alouds and storytelling hours that often include discussions and presentations by the children themselves, as well as summer reading programs. For middle and junior high school kids, there may also be book talks, summer reading programs, creative writing seminars, drama groups, and poetry readings. In many areas, libraries also have special services for helping kids with homework and research projects, including telephone or internet help, workshops, or tutoring programs.

Summer Reading

After the school year is over, some children don't have the opportunity to continue reading and practice the reading skills they have learned. Libraries help keep children interested in reading by offering summer programs. Children and teens alike are often encouraged to read books on their own, and to keep a diary or log of what they have read. Libraries may also offer book discussion groups. And, because reading aloud is so important to promoting a love of reading, many libraries offer "Read-to-Me" clubs for preschool and younger children.

Computers

Many libraries have computers for public use, and there are a lot of computer programs (also called software) offering activities that can both grab your child's interest and teach good lessons. Since children's programs vary in quality, don't hesitate to ask the librarian for information and recommendations about good software.

What Parents Can Do: Reading Tips From Kids

By: Reading Is Fundamental (2005)

Here are a few tried-and-true guidelines from Reading Is Fundamental on how to motivate kids to read.

Let kids pick out their own books

Book choice is a strong motivation for readers young and old. Let kids pick out books at the library or bookstore. It's almost a sure thing they'll want to read them. If you pick them out, they won't.

Set goals and reward reading

Reward reading with more reading, we've always said. Stop by the library or bookstore for the next book in your child's favorite series, or let your child shop for it online. Most kids agree, but they don't also see a problem with more... well, extrinsic rewards.

Let your kids see you read

Read the newspaper over your morning coffee, take a magazine from the rack in a doctor's office while you wait, and stuff a paperback into your purse, pocket, or briefcase. Your kids will catch on to the fact that reading is something you like to do in your spare time.

Make reading together fun and memorable

Parents can convey important positive impressions about reading by making reading an experience their children will remember and cherish.

Emily says, "My mom really likes to read to me and she makes the books sound funny by using different voices."

It's not what you read to your child that counts; it's how. Make a story come alive by changing your voice and pace, or using sound effects and motions.

Create loving associations with books and reading

Reading together is a time for closeness and cuddling – another way to show your love as a parent, grandparent, or caring adult.

For children lucky enough to have parents who read to them, the memory is lasting and their love for books and reading lifelong.

"Most of all, do it the old-fashioned way. Hold your child while you read together.

Motivating the Middle School Reader

Middle School can be a difficult time for many students. They face a more challenging curriculum, emotional and social changes, and increasing peer pressure. One of the keys to success is strong literacy skills. Unfortunately, many middle school children struggle with reading. Here are some tips to motivate your child to enjoy reading and build literacy skills.

1. Keep a variety of reading materials in your home. All reading is helpful – from comics to short stories – to full-length novels.
2. Match reading materials to your teens' interests. If they are interested in sports, provide sports related written materials.
3. Use the library weekly. Have your teen check out a new book every week and encourage them to read it and orally tell you about it. Most libraries have a teen section.
4. Help improve your teen's vocabulary by introducing new words every day. Have a white board where you write the word of the day and practice using it with your teen.
5. Use TV and movie "tie in" materials. If your teen likes a particular book, movie, or TV show, find materials that relate to both the show and the concept behind the show.
6. Set an example for your teen by reading everyday. Set up a special reading time for the family where everyone reads at the same time.
7. Use newspapers and magazines to motivate your teen. Entertainment, sports, fashion, etc. will motivate your teen to read.
8. Current events can be a great motivator for reading. Discuss the news with your teen and encourage him/her to learn more about what is happening.