

# Parenting Questions— Answered!

How can you make sure your youngsters do well in school? How can you keep them safe? Here are answers to these questions, and more, from parents like you.



## Where's the homework?

**Q** My daughter often forgets to bring home assignments and the materials needed to do them. What can I do to help?

**A** Many parents—and children—find a homework log to be useful for keeping track of assignments.



Each week, have your youngster make a blank log in a notebook. She can write the days of the week across the top of a page and list her school subjects down the left side (language arts, math, science, social

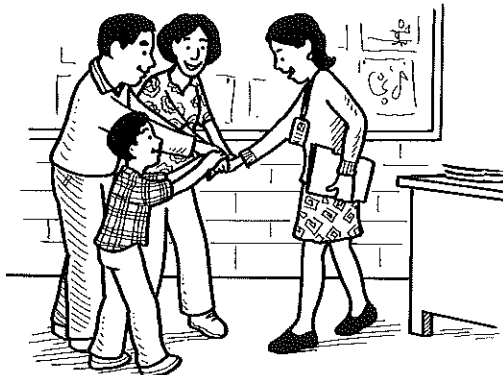
studies). At school, she should fill in each homework assignment under the proper day.

Share this plan with your child's teacher. The teacher may be willing to check and initial the log to ensure that it's accurate. Then, your daughter could bring the notebook home each day so you can initial the boxes when she shows you her completed homework at night!

## Be a parent-teacher team

**Q** I want to develop a good relationship with my son's teacher. What do you suggest?

**A** First, make contact with the teacher as soon as possible. Most schools schedule an evening after school begins for parents to visit and meet teachers face-to-face.



Also, consider writing a short note or email to introduce yourself. You can share a few of your youngster's strengths and interests, as well as areas where he may need help.

Continue to keep in touch by attending parent-teacher conferences and writing or emailing the teacher. You might give updates on your home situation (military deployment, separation or divorce) and mention concerns about your child's learning. Share good news, too, such as telling the teacher about a school project that your youngster particularly enjoyed.

By working together, you'll strengthen your child's chances of success and prevent unpleasant surprises at report card time.

## Cut down on sibling fights

**Q** Our kids seem to be enemies. All they do is argue. Are there ways to cut down on all this fighting?

**A** A certain amount of disagreement is normal. Try to remain calm, which may help your children settle down. Or consider going into another room—taking away their audience can often end the arguing.

Another tactic is to try humor. Ask your youngsters to do something like sing their argument to each other. With any luck, it will end in laughter.

Finally, instead of being a referee, have them work together to find their own

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solution. First, each person should explain his side, without interruptions from the other person. Then, they can brainstorm solutions and pick one to try.

*Note:* If your kids are hurting each other, step in, and send them to separate rooms to cool off.

## Raise a reader

**Q** *I know reading is important for school success. How can I get my child to read for fun and strengthen his skills at the same time?*



**A** Reading aloud to your youngster, no matter how well he reads, is a great way to motivate a young reader. Try making your own cliff-hangers. Simply stop reading at an exciting part and watch him pick up where you left off—just to see what happens!

Regular trips to the library can increase your child's desire to read, too. The trick is finding reading materials he will love. Let him browse the children's section for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books. Also, librarians will be happy to point him toward books and magazines related to his interests.

While you're there, encourage your youngster to get his own library card. It will give him "ownership" of his library experience—and make trips there seem more grown-up!

## Keep children safe

**Q** *The world can be a scary place these days. What skills should I teach my child to help keep her safe?*

**A** The key word is prevention. Start by making sure your youngster knows her full name, address, and phone number (along with your cell numbers) and how to call 911 in an emergency.

It's also important to teach her "stranger smarts." She should not talk to a stranger, take anything from a stranger, or go near a stranger's car. Warn her that strangers might ask for help, such as finding a lost pet, to convince a child to go with them.

Finally, let her know that she should stay near you in public places, such as malls or movie theaters. If you ever get separated, she should tell the nearest clerk.



## Bully-proof body language

**Q** *My youngster gets picked on sometimes. How can I help him avoid being a victim?*

**A** Using confident body language is one way to make your son less of a target. Does he slouch and hang his head to avoid being noticed? Suggest that he square his shoulders and hold his head high instead.



Have him practice keeping his gaze at eye level and glancing at others as they go by. Finally, help him to notice how he walks. A pace that's very fast or one that's hesitant signals uncertainty and fear. Encourage him to practice walking at an easy, relaxed pace.

If a bully approaches him, he should go to another part of the playground or join a group of children who are talking or playing. In general, it's best for him to stay with other kids, since bullies are more likely to pick on kids who are alone.

*Note:* Let your child know that if he feels threatened, he should immediately get support from an adult.

## Handle back talk

**Q** *My once-obedient daughter is now disrespectful. She's sassy, talks back, and has a "smart" answer for everything. When I correct her, the situation gets worse. Help!*

**A** Disrespect is a common problem as children get older. Sometimes they talk back because they feel criticized. Try changing the tone of your voice or the way you phrase things, and see if your daughter's behavior improves.

Another strategy is to ask why she's angry. Listen to what she says, and try not to jump on her answer. Instead, thank her for sharing, and work on the problem together.

Finally, you can explain that you don't want to be treated rudely and tell her that you won't respond when she acts that way. Then, ignore her behavior, walk away, or tell her that you'll talk later when you're both calm.