



Chapter One

PARENTING 101

A LEARNING FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT Getting Started

Every parent wants his or her son or daughter to have a successful K-12 school experience. Parents are responsible for helping their students to have successful elementary, middle and high school experiences. It is important that the home environment lend itself to learning. Parents must organize the appropriate resources to help their child to learn. It's important to have a location that is off limits to noise. You may need to actually print up a sign that says "Quiet Study Room" and post it on the door.

Your children should know that you are in favor of them maximizing their ability to learn. You are committed to purchasing a desk, books, computer and other resources that are the tools for learning. Students need to expand their knowledge through the resources that are available to them in their home. A dictionary is a good resource that will help a student to understand terms that are important. Watching television should become an educational experience. Programs watched should focus on history, science and the environment. Many of these programs can be found on the Public Broadcasting System.

Choose something that you and your child can view that causes your child to think and ask questions. You should willingly discuss money, important topics in the news and community affairs. Surround your children with peers who will have a positive influence on their academic goals. Invite their friends to your home and encourage them to form study groups. Serving food always helps. Try to create an environment where learning is a positive experience. There are many resources that you can purchase at bookstores to keep your child excited about learning. Fill your home with hundreds of books about history, politics, science, and nature. Frequently go on a book shopping adventure at Borders, Barnes and Nobles or a thrift store. You can bring the world to your students just by letting them read about other countries.

FAST TIPS

- *Parents must begin by guiding their child's learning experience*
- *Say NO to television time and turn it into reading time.*

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Choose A Place to Study

Finding a location to study may sound like a simple task, but in many cases it is not. The place a student studies is a critical aspect of a successful study session. This place should remind a student of past accomplishments in math, science and English. Those particular tests should be posted in their room.

There are several things you can do to make a location a good place to study. The first thing is to choose a spot that everyone knows is off limits to loud noises, like television or radio. Some students think that they should be entertained while they study, however loud noises serve as a distraction to the brain and it will limit your student's ability to absorb information. Studying in a quiet environment will allow your child to maximize his understanding and to enjoy the learning experience. The sooner that a parent institutes a practice of encouraging their student to study in a quiet environment, the sooner the child will develop this habit for life.

Secondly, identify a desk or table in an environment that has good lighting. The eyes are the gateway to learning. Light enables the individual to clearly see the material that they are studying. A dim light can cause a student to strain their eyes, which can result in headaches. Finding the proper location is important to help your child understand that you consider his learning experience a priority. Sometimes you may need to take your son or daughter to the library so that he or she can experience a different type of learning environment. The earlier you take your child to the library, the better the opportunity to help him/her understand that the library is a valuable resource for information when completing term papers and other types of assignments.



FAST TIPS

- *Consistently remind your child to study in a quiet environment.*
- *Visit a library to provide an alternate place for your child to study.*

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Resources That Help

Every student should have the appropriate tools for learning. Create or buy a supply closet so that you will have a central place for your children to find their supplies. You should also place bookshelves with different resource books throughout your home. Erasers, pencils, pens, crayons, colored pencils, colored paper, and cardboard should also be on hand. These are things that a student needs to get started. These basic items can be purchased at the local dollar store and should be easily accessible to your child.

Other items include several rulers and highlighting materials that your child can use on special projects. You may also want to go to a specialty store to get items that are useful for projects, such as artificial grass, trees and other art materials. Folders, three ring binders, clear plastic covers, paper clips and other types of clips should be purchased to ensure that the student organizes papers in such a way that the instructor will easily understand them.

Keeping documents organized is an important part of the learning process. Students will be required to write different types of papers throughout the year. Parents should understand that papers should be typed on plain white paper, however there also may be different types of papers required. Make sure your child purchases the appropriate type of paper. A project could require construction paper or even resume paper. All can be purchased at the local store. These resources can help a student give an effective presentation or adequately complete homework assignments. Some other stores you might want to frequent for supplies include Staples, K-mart, Wal-Mart, local dollar stores, arts and crafts stores and hobby shops. At these stores you will find all kinds of creative items for projects that are assigned throughout the year. Projects can account for one third of a students' grade so don't discount the importance of seeking out the best quality materials to help your son or daughter complete them.

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It is also important to have a reference library in your home. Some of the items you should include are a Webster's dictionary, a thesaurus, a dictionary of synonyms and a dictionary of computer terms. These are all important resources for gathering information concerning any books that your student is likely to read. Don't forget special language books, such as Spanish, French, German and Russian dictionaries. These should be purchased so a student can have an easy understanding of languages and other topics.

Books are vital resources that provide topics for research papers and insight into specific subjects. Specialty books in your home should include books on biology, specifically insects, the human body, reptiles and all kinds of animals. Every family should have no less than 400 different types of books in their home. Places to purchase books abound. Many can be found at a reasonable cost at yard sales, flea markets or used bookstores. Ask friends for old books so that you can expand your child's library.

Reading is an essential skill students must develop. Strong readers are better writers. Writing is a skill that will be required throughout a child's life. A computer is now considered a standard learning tool required for many different types of projects. If finances do not allow for you to have a computer at home then utilize computers at your local library. Look in the Yellow Pages for used computer stores. These stores can offer computers at a reduced price. Ask relatives if they have an old computer that has a basic word processing program that can be used to type papers. New computers can be purchased in just about any electronic or office supply store. Brands include Dell, IBM, Hewlett Packard and Compaq. These are all good and can provide access to online materials to help your student.

FAST TIPS

- *Keep at least 400 books in your home.*
- *A new or used computer can increase your student's chances of earning better grades.*

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How to Create A Quiet Environment

Establishing a quiet environment starts with everyone in the house understanding the importance of quiet time. Organize a meeting to talk about when quiet time is essential. Everyone must agree on how they will cooperate with the plan. A formal meeting lets everyone know that this is a priority for improving your child's academic performance. Each person has a role to play. Encourage your son or daughter to share how his or her grades have improved since studying in a quiet environment. For many families, the living room, kitchen or bedroom is the place their students study. Students should try to stay clear of times when there are a lot of people or traffic in these rooms. For example, at the dining room table, it is better to take a break and eat dinner then to have major distractions while you study. The brain absorbs information best when there is a quiet environment.



FAST TIPS

- *Emphasize the importance of having a plan to earn good grades.*
- *Help your student to keep their brain active by reading new books each week.*

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Keep it Positive

It is important to create a positive environment for your student to learn. A mind that is free of stress and anxiety can retain information better. Both the mind and the body are adversely affected when a student becomes anxious during a studying session. Frustration can set in if the student does not have sufficient information in his notes or textbook. The key is to keep the student's life positive by providing him with the resources and tutoring that he may need to have a meaningful learning experience.

Try to identify academically successful friends, as well as teachers who can have a positive influence on your child. Also, identify a teacher who will help your son or daughter to maximize his or her learning experience. Connect with a teacher who understands your son or daughter's learning style and who can communicate the best way that you can help him or her at home. When a student knows that someone cares about them, they relax and learn information easily. Certain subject areas may also require additional books, compact discs and audiotapes designed to help you student learn more constructively. Your positive attitude can save your son or daughter from having bad experiences and can even improve his or her test scores.

For example, if you tell your child that you don't like mathematics, it could cause him to automatically assume that he can't learn that same subject. So turn your thoughts around about it and don't even communicate the fact that you don't understand mathematics. Find the resources that will help him understand it. It may require a tutor or other individuals in class or it might require direct contact with the instructor to get the best results for your student.

Enable the rest of the children in the home to maintain a positive attitude and encourage them to read different types of materials that talk about keeping positive thoughts. Also, look for books about successful leaders who have overcome adversity to accomplish tremendous goals. These types of books can encourage your children to achieve greater success.

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Parenting 101 Application

- ONE As a parent you must view yourself as the teacher who successfully manages the home learning environment. You must be willing to set limits on television viewing and video game playing during the week as well as time spent on the telephone, computer and internet. These are the biggest distractions that most students face. You must say no to these when your student does not perform well on a test. If your student is having a problem, your next step is to talk with the teacher directly and pursue tutoring.
- TWO Don't be afraid to say no to the things your child wants when they are not performing well in school. You may need to take away certain privileges, like playing on the basketball team or participating in the marching band. Removing them for a time may seem difficult, but it will pay off when your student starts to achieve better grades.
- THREE Parents play a major role in putting the puzzle called education together. There are many things that a parent can do to lay a solid foundation for learning at home and school. Parents must make a commitment to creating a formal study time when your child comes home from school. Studying in the evening should not be acceptable unless the student plays a school sport. When a student studies soon after school they have better recall of what they learned during the day.
- FOUR Organize your calendar so that you can attend all parent-teacher meetings throughout the school year.
- FIVE Help your student to create a personal entertainment-free study zone. A television or computer can be too much of a distraction for some students. You can set up a fantastic learning environment that is free of distractions. Ask your student to offer some suggestions about items to include in their study area.

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- SIX Develop a study plan that includes substantial reading. Spend time talking to your child about the book they are reading. Give your child special attention and an opportunity to see a stage production of the story. You can also have discussions about what lesson the book is trying to teach the reader.

List several books your child will read:

- A. Encourage your student to write down the characters from the book and summarize their roles. The review sheet your student creates will act as a resource when they need to report on the book.
- SEVEN Don't wait until the new school year to plan your child's educational experience. If you have questions that were left unanswered after the last school year, arrange an August meeting with his former teacher. Also meet with your student's new teacher to be sure that you know what your student needs. Let's say for example, English is a subject where your student needs help. During August ask his teacher about the availability of tutoring and other resources.

Notes

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What Parents are Saying

Pastors Terry and Pam Davis

1. Set a high standard regarding your son/daughters performance in each class reiterating those standards periodically.
2. Provide reward incentives for reaching grade and class behavior goals.
3. Sit down with the person who is responsible for creating a class schedule. Make sure that there are sufficient math and English courses in the assigned curriculum.
4. Make sure they get a good night's sleep and eat a full breakfast (not Pop Tarts, etc.) with vitamin supplements every morning. It really makes a difference in how they feel and perform especially before lunch which is when most of their work is done.
5. Study time is immediately after school everyday until all work is complete. If none is assigned then some type of review study or reading is done.
6. All extended work (book reading, projects) should be scheduled and completed early or on time to avoid late and shoddy last minute work.
7. Video games and TV are strictly limited, but not completely eliminated, during the school week.
8. Talk about classes and assignments regularly to make sure they understand and stay on track. If there are any problems spend extra time together in that area and encourage your son/daughter not to be afraid to ask for help in class or say "I don't understand".
9. Weekend homework, when assigned, is done early in the weekend. Because study during the week is enforced pretty strictly, weekends are generally for fun. They need that too.

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Parenting 101 Summary

1. Keep education as a primary focus of your discussion.
2. Don't set a limit on the amount of resources you will use to prepare your son/daughter for college.
3. Talk with family members who have successfully sent a child to college.
4. Ask your child's teacher for suggested books to read during the summer.
5. Use positive words to raise your child's motivation to learn.
6. It's important to begin with the end in mind.
7. Enroll your child in a community college course during high school.
8. Don't be afraid to change schools if you do not feel that your student is getting the best education.
9. Visit a local library or book store to let your son/daughter meet an author in person. You can make writers their heroes.
10. Watch educational DVD movies about a history lesson your student is learning in class.

Parenting 101 Activities

1. Sit down with friends who have academically successful children and ask them about their education strategies.
2. Form and select the themes for your student's projects at the beginning of the year.
3. Make a list of distractions preventing your child from studying. Get started by clearing the distractions daily. Create a formal time for your student to study in a quiet environment.
4. Create your own library of books and magazines that will help you to uniquely educate your child. Pursue information on the internet.