

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®



SHORT NOTES

Celebrate progress

Suggest that your youngster create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a container with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I memorized my times tables") on a slip of paper and put it in the container. If she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

Excellent attendance

Being in school every day means your child won't miss out on learning. Try to schedule appointments and family trips outside of school hours. If he asks to stay home "just because," remind him of what he'll miss, such as his reading group or art class. Explain that he can be absent only if he's sick or if there's a family emergency.

Eat meals together

You may have heard that it's important for families to eat dinner together. But other meals count, too. If you work in the evenings, maybe you could make time for a family breakfast. On a weekend, try a picnic lunch! Research shows that children who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and avoid risky behavior.

Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up!"
Mark Twain

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What's yellow and smells just like green paint?

A: Yellow paint.



Homework solutions that work

Like an actor rehearsing his lines or a batter working on his swing, your child does homework to practice what he learns in school. And if he's like most youngsters, homework brings occasional challenges. Here are solutions to common problems he might face.

Getting started

When your child gets home from school or after-school care, he might want to relax for a little while, or he may want to jump right in and work. Have him try each method for one week and keep track of how it goes. He could write notes in each day's calendar square. ("Went great!" or "Hard time getting started.") After two weeks, he can review the notes to see which routine worked best.

Staying motivated

Does your youngster ever feel restless when he's doing homework? Suggest that he get up and move to a new spot. For example, he might finish his vocabulary assignment at the kitchen table and then read his science chapter on the



porch. A planned break (say, to have a snack or take a walk) can also give him a second wind.

Solving problems

Help your child make a list of strategies he can use when he gets stuck. For a math assignment, he might try tools like a number line or find sample problems in his book. When he's reading, he could look up words in a dictionary or reread a paragraph. **Tip:** If he's still stumped, he might call a friend or write down his question to ask his teacher the next day.♥

Family teamwork

Whether your youngsters are doing a group project or playing Hacky Sack, a team effort is needed. Everyone's a winner with these games that will show them teamwork in action.

Lower the yardstick. Together, hold a yardstick horizontally so that everyone has one finger underneath. Then, lower the yardstick to the ground—but if anyone's finger drops away, you have to start over. See how many tries it takes to get the yardstick to the floor.

Pass the ball. Sit in a circle with your feet out toward the center. Pass a ball around the circle—using only your feet. How many times can the ball go around before it drops on the ground?♥



Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

INFO BITS



Open-door angles

Doors in your house are the perfect place for hands-on practice with angles. Take turns opening or closing a door and asking, "Acute, right, or obtuse?" Partially open a door, and it's an acute angle. Open it straight out, and it's a right angle. Open it wider, and it's obtuse.

Habitat for rent

Help your child think about what animals need to survive (shelter, food, water). Then, have her choose an animal (monkey) and write a classified ad for a home that will meet its needs. Example: "Tall tree in a tropical rain forest. Large river nearby for drinking. Plenty of leaves, fruit, and insects to eat."

Book picks

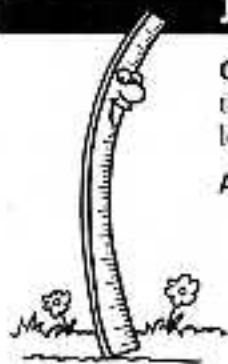
Hotel Infinity is fully booked, but there's always room for more. Read *The Cat in Numberland* (Ivar Ekeland) for a clever introduction to infinity.

Learning about the solar system is fun when planets tell the story themselves. Dan Green's *Astronomy: Out of This World!* contains fascinating facts and details along with cartoon illustrations your youngster is sure to love.

Just for fun

Q: What has three feet but no legs or arms?

A: A yard.



Fractions of fun

Understanding fractions is much easier when your child can visualize them. Here are ideas to help her see—and use—fractions.

Keep a diary. Show her that fractions are a part of everyday life. For a week, have her record and illustrate each one she notices. For instance, she might write, "We had a half day of school today," or "Mom asked for $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of turkey at the store." How many examples can she find and draw?

Play a game. Have each player cut a sheet of construction paper into six horizontal strips. She should leave the first one whole and then cut the second one in half (fold it, and cut along the fold), and the others into thirds, fourths, sixths, and eighths. With bits of masking tape, label a die: $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, and "wild." To play, roll the die, and lay the matching



piece of paper on your whole strip (for "wild," choose any piece). The goal is to be the first one to fill your strip without overlapping any pieces (example: $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = 1$ whole strip).

Put in order. Together, make a set of fraction cards, with one fraction per index card ($\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, 1 , $1\frac{1}{2}$, $1\frac{1}{3}$, $1\frac{1}{4}$, 2). Shuffle the cards, and see how quickly your youngster can put them in order. Then, while she closes her eyes, lay the cards in order but leave out a few. Give her the missing cards, and have her put them where they go.

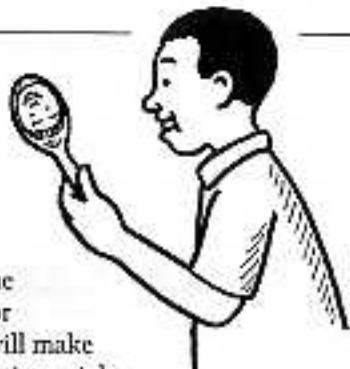
Look at me!

Help your youngster learn about the science of optics with this mealtime activity.

Have him look at himself in a clean spoon. What happens if he looks in the bowl of the spoon? (He's upside down.) What happens on the other side? (He's right side up.)

Next, have him bring his finger toward the spoon and watch what happens on each side. The bowl (the concave side) will magnify his finger, or make it look larger. The back (the convex side) will make his finger look smaller. Ask your child how scientists might use this information to make eyeglasses, cameras, or telescopes.

Tip: He can remember which side is which by thinking of concave as "caves in."



Multiply and divide

Learning to multiply and divide can be more about thinking than memorizing. Strategies like these can help your child practice.

Make it fun

Practice using toys or food. If your child collects toy animals, you might ask, "How many legs do 4 horses have?" He can "skip count" the legs by 4s (4, 8, 12, 16) to see that $4 \times 4 = 16$. If he has 17 pretzels and wants to give 3 friends an equal amount, he can "deal them out." He'll see that each person gets 5, and there are 2 left over. ($17 \div 3 = 5$, remainder 2)



Use what you know

Encourage your youngster to look for clues to help him solve problems. For 8×7 , he could consider other facts he knows. "I know 4 groups of $7 = 28$. I need 8 groups, so I can double that answer.

If $28 + 28 = 56$, then $8 \times 7 = 56$." For $30 \div 5$, he might say, "I know $10 \div 5 = 2$. There are three 10s in 30, and $3 \times 2 = 6$. So $30 \div 5$ must be 6." 🍌

Q & A Ask math questions

Q: I've never felt comfortable with math. How should I talk to my children about what they're learning in math class?

A: Try to show enthusiasm for what your youngsters are doing in math. You might ask them each day at dinner or homework time what they studied in math that day. Let them explain the concepts they're working on, and follow up with questions. For instance, if they're learning about decimals, you could ask how decimal points are used in money (they separate the parts of a dollar from the whole dollar).

Then, when your children finish their homework, have them show you how they solved a few problems. As they explain their methods to you, they'll be reinforcing their own skills. And they'll be proud to be teaching you something! 🍌



MATH CORNER

Find, build, compute

What do a shoebox, book, and refrigerator have in common? They are all rectangular prisms, or solid shapes with rectangles for their faces (sides). Encourage your child to explore geometry with this common shape.

Volume. Let her build a rectangular prism out of dice, sugar cubes, or same-sized Legos. Her model should be solid, with no hidden spaces. When she finishes, have her figure out the volume (count the cubes along the height, width, and length, and multiply the three numbers together). To check her math, she can take apart her structure and count all the cubes.

Dimensions. Give your youngster 36 blocks, and see how many different sizes of rectangular prisms she can build. Have her record dimensions of each one. Examples: $2 \times 2 \times 9$ and $2 \times 3 \times 6$. What do the sets have in common? (Each product equals 36.) 🍌



SCIENCE LAB

Save your breath

Your youngster can inflate a balloon without using his breath. A chemical reaction will do the job for him!

You'll need: empty plastic soda bottle (20 fl. oz.), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, 1 tsp. baking soda, uninflated balloon, lemon juice

Here's how: Have your child add the water and baking soda to the bottle, close the cap, and swirl it around until the water is cloudy. Then, help him stretch out the

balloon and place the opening over the top of the bottle, leaving a small space. He should very quickly add a little lemon juice, seal the balloon completely over the bottle, and shake lightly.

What happens? The balloon inflates.

Why? When you mix an acid (lemon juice) with a base (baking soda), they create carbon dioxide. The molecules spread out as the gas forms, pushing against the walls of the balloon and causing it to inflate. 🍌



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's math and science skills.

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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*

What if the library came

to your neighborhood on the back of a donkey? This is Jeanette Winter's true story of a Colombian schoolteacher's traveling library, which brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Dragons Love Tacos*

When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly story by Adam Rubin about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.



■ *Just a Second*

In just 1 second, a bumblebee flaps its wings 100 times and the earth travels 18½ miles. Steve Jenkins's nonfiction hook will help your child think about time in fascinating ways. She'll also discover different methods of measuring time.

■ *Bedtime Is Canceled*

Maggie and her brother write their parents an official-looking note: "Bedtime is canceled." Somehow, the note blows out the window, lands in a newspaper office, and ends up in a headline. Soon, bedtime really is canceled, and exhausted children quickly discover the importance of sleep. A nice read-aloud by

Cece Meng.



Storytime

Want to spend time with your youngster, build her reading skills, and help her learn to love books? You can do all three when you read aloud to her. Here are some suggestions.

Read regularly

Try to read to your child every day. You might aim for 10–15 minutes of bedtime reading for a peaceful end to the day. Bring along a book, and read to her during a sibling's sports practice. Or curl up together with a book when you get home from work.

Take turns choosing books

Your youngster may want to hear old favorites again and again. Use your turn for new titles and variety (nonfiction, poetry).

Let her participate

Ask your child to turn the pages while you read. Also, she can finish sentences that rhyme or fill in words she



knows. Go slowly so she has time to understand the story and look at the illustrations. She'll enjoy read-aloud time more if she plays an active role.

Be playful

You can use different voices for different characters (a high, squeaky voice for a mouse or a deep, booming voice for a horse). Or substitute your youngster's name for the main character's name, and use family members' names for other characters. *Note:* You don't have to be an expert reader — your child will love it when you read aloud because it's you.♥

Writing that makes sense

When a child first learns to write, his stories may not always make sense to others. Help his writing flow logically with these two ideas.

1. Let him read his stories to you. Ask questions to encourage him to add information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a confusing part ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you, or your brother?").

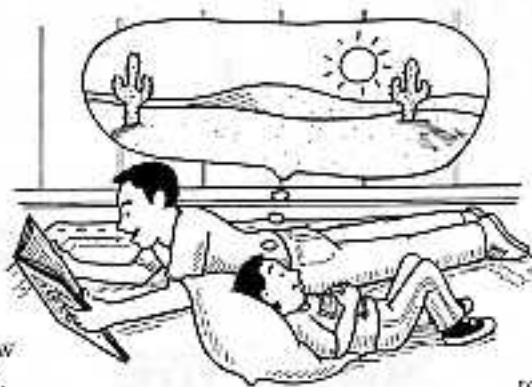
2. Even if he isn't writing sentences yet, he can tell you stories. He might describe the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch. He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help when he puts his thoughts and ideas down on paper.♥



Read between the lines

Learning to infer, or “read between the lines,” is one key to good reading comprehension. Consider these tips for helping your youngster make inferences when he reads.

Describe the setting. Pick a book, and read a few sentences to your child (without him looking). Leave out words that name the setting. *Example:* “Sand stretched in all directions...cacti dotted the landscape.” Can he infer where the story is set? If he isn’t sure, give him a hint. (“Where do you see lots of sand and cacti?”)



Look for lessons. Fables are great for reading between the lines. Read one by Aesop, and help your youngster figure out the lesson. For instance, “The Tortoise and the Hare” teaches that even if you’re slow, you can win if you just keep going. Have him point out parts that he used to make his inference. (“The tortoise never stopped, and he took one good step after another.”)

Use prompts. Questions that start with “Why do you think...?” or “How do you know...?” can encourage your child to infer. You might ask why he thinks a character behaved the way he did or how he knows it’s going to snow. Together, look for clues in the book that may help him answer the questions.♥

Fun with Words

Wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s phonemic awareness—her ability to hear sounds in words:

- Choose a three-letter word, such as *cap*. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet to make new words (*lap, map, nap, rap, sap, tap, zap*). How many can she think of?



- Pick a long word, and tell her to clap once as she says each syllable. For *mazzarella*, she would clap four times: *maz-zu-rel-la*.

- Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. *Example:* “Can you say *sit* without the *s*?” (*Answer: It*)

- Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew. The word has an *uh* sound in the middle.” (*Answer: Gum*)♥

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To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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All kinds of words

A large vocabulary can turn your child into a better reader and writer. Try these everyday ways to help her learn new words.

Keep your ears open. When you and your youngster go places, point out words that people use. Maybe a waiter describes an *entree* or the dentist talks about *molars*. Encourage your child to figure out what they mean by the way they’re used.

Go beyond nouns. Help your youngster add verbs and adjectives to her vocabulary. Sports and games offer opportunities to use action words. Let your child hear you comment on the softball that *soars* or the runner who *sprints*. When she sends thank-you notes or greeting cards, suggest descriptive words (a *polka-dot* shirt, a *fantastic* birthday).♥



Parent to Parent

Build, read, and write!

My son James loves to play with blocks. At our parent-teacher conference last month, his teacher suggested that we use blocks to fit in extra reading and writing practice.

We found books about things he could make, such as castles, skyscrapers, and monuments, and I put them with his blocks for inspiration. At first, I thought he’d just look at the pictures, but he has started pointing

out facts that he reads, like how moats kept enemies away from castles. I also encouraged James to write signs to go with his buildings. When he made an airport, for example, he wrote “Tickets,” “Bags,” and “Taxi” on slips of paper and taped them to the blocks.

I’ve noticed that James’s buildings are more creative—and I’m happy that he’s reading and writing while he plays.♥

