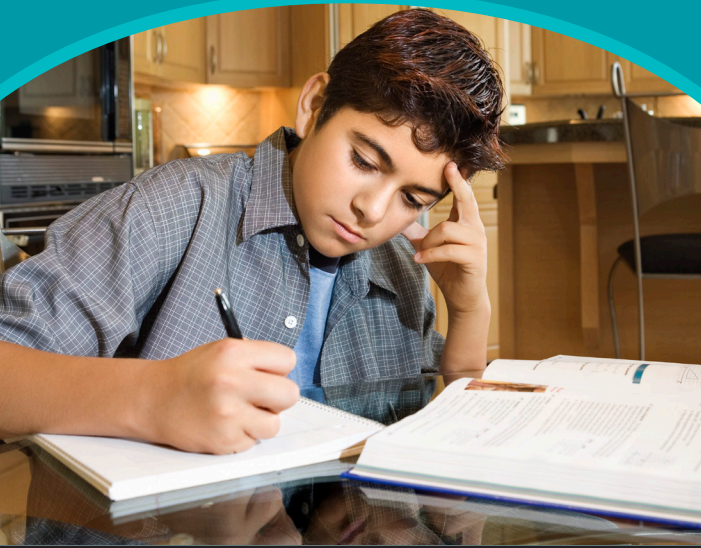


# Learning Is Your Child's Responsibility



**Y**our oldest child needs help researching information for a paper that's due tomorrow. Your middle child needs a ride to the store for science project supplies—right now. Your youngest says it will be impossible to pass this week's spelling test if you don't go over the words together. How did your desire to help your kids make them think that their schoolwork was your responsibility?

With the advice in this guide, you can put the responsibility for learning back where it belongs—on your children.

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## You Can Be Too Involved!

**I**t's important for families to be involved with their children's learning. But being over-involved can cause problems. When adults assume too much responsibility, children assume little or none.

To change this balance, hold your child accountable. For instance, does your child wait until the very last minute to start a project? What do you do when your child insists on a ride to the store right now for a project due tomorrow?

If you're over-involved, you may get in the car. Instead, try a different approach. Say something like, "I'm sorry. I can't go to the store today. I can do it tomorrow."

Several things may happen. First, your child may discover that a trip to the store isn't absolutely necessary to complete the project. Second, the lowered grade may teach an important lesson about putting things off until the last minute. In any case, you've made it clear that schoolwork is your child's responsibility.

## Let Your Child Experience the Consequences

**S**ometimes, families try to shield children from the consequences of their actions. They return their library books. They finish their chores. They may even do assignments for them!

All of that sends the message that children can't do things for themselves. In the end, it doesn't help children grow up.

By holding your child accountable, you teach that actions do have consequences. Forgetting a library book may mean your child must wait to check out a new one. Choosing not to study for a test may lead to a low grade.



# Let Your Child Do the Assignment

How do you spell *separate*?" "What is  $7 \times 4$ ?" When some kids do their assignments, they ask their parents for the answers. There are times to answer your child's questions. But before you do, consider these two things:

1. **Where else can your child find the answer?** Besides teaching facts, assignments should teach students *how to find* facts. Instead of giving the correct spelling of *separate*, say, "The first three letters are S-E-P. Look it up in the dictionary."



2. **Is the question a central part of the assignment?** If your child is studying the multiplication tables, the assignment needs to reflect what *your child* knows, not what *you* know. But, if a question is only partly related to the assignment, you may save time and frustration by helping your child find the answer.

"Where does the sun go at night?"

"Why do camels have humps on their backs?"

"What makes the sky blue?"

## Let Your Child Find the Answers

Anyone who has spent time with children knows that they learn by asking questions.

Answering some questions is easy. ("No, you can't stay up until midnight. Tomorrow is a school day.") But other questions can help children take more responsibility for their own learning.

When your child asks you a question, say, "Let's look up the answer the next time we go to the library." Then have your child write the question on an index card.

Take the index cards when you visit the library. Together, look in the reference books the library has available or check the catalog. Then listen as your child reads the answers to the questions.

This will teach several important lessons. Your child will find the answers to the questions—and learn that the library contains answers to lots of questions. Finally, your child will be learning some research skills that are important throughout all the years of school.

## Make the Responsibility for Learning Clear

When students accept responsibility for their own learning, success in school will come more easily. Families can help by showing interest but stopping short of doing the work. Children must experience the results of their actions, even if grades occasionally suffer.

When children finally take responsibility for their own learning, they do even better than they could have if their parents had helped them every step of the way.



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