

THIRD

THIRD GRADE

Parent Guidebook



Dear Parent

Welcome to the third grade. This is an exciting time for your child. During this year, your third grader will develop new skills, study new subjects, and build new friendships. Your child will also become more responsible, independent, and self-sufficient.

As a parent, there are a number of things you can do to help your child have a successful year. Read on to learn how you can support your third grader during this very important year.



We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term “parent” refers to any primary caregiver.

Third Grade Parent Guidebook

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Introduction

In third grade, students read longer books, write longer paragraphs, and do more complex math. This is also the year that standardized testing often begins. Third grade is a very important year, and your support and guidance are key to your child's success.

This book goes over the ways your child will develop and grow this year— physically, intellectually, and socially. It also discusses what your child might study and learn in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Most importantly, this book provides a number of simple things you can do at home to help your third grader be successful, both in and out of the classroom.

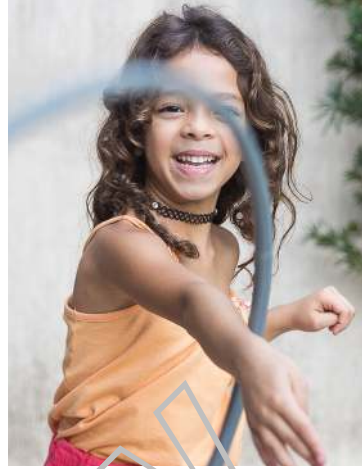


Let's make this a great year!

Children develop at different rates

There is a wide range of what “normal” looks like at this age. Schools recognize that third graders have varying skill levels, and third grade teachers are prepared to work with students with an array of skills and learning preferences.

Growing Up: Third Grade



Physical Development

Third graders generally exhibit increased coordination in their physical activities (e.g., running and skipping, throwing/kicking a ball).

Children this age are full of energy, but they often don't know when to stop and relax. Provide your child with an outlet for his/her energy (e.g., a sport, gymnastics, martial arts).

To help your third grader stay healthy and strong, have nutritious food at home, and make sure that your child gets the recommended 9-11 hours of sleep each night.

Intellectual Development

Third graders are interested in learning about the world and how things work. Be prepared to field questions on topics ranging from the human body to how various technologies work. If you don't know the answers to your child's questions, search for the answers together.

You might notice that your third grader is developing a more sophisticated sense of humor. Joke around with your child, and share things you find funny. This is a great way to bond with your child.

Social Development

Third graders often enjoy working and interacting with groups of peers. They also tend to have close or "best" friends. Give your third grader opportunities to socialize with other children, spend time with friends, and participate in group activities. Sports teams, gymnastics, and dance classes provide good opportunities for socialization.

Third Grade Academics

Third grade academics vary depending on the school; however, there are certain skills and subjects you can expect your child to work on this year.

Reading

In third grade, students go from learning to read to “reading to learn.” Students read books, articles, and poems, and they discuss what they read with others.

Promote reading

To become a good reader, students need lots of practice. *Encourage your child to read any way you can!* Here are some ways to promote reading in your home.

- ▶ Take your child to the library on a regular basis.
- ▶ Give books for holiday and birthday gifts.
- ▶ Choose a book series to work through together (e.g., *Magic Tree House* or *Captain Underpants*). Take turns reading to each other.
- ▶ Encourage your child to join a reading club at the local library.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Let your child see you reading newspapers, books, and magazines. At dinner, discuss what you’ve read.
- ▶ Have a 20-minute period each night when the entire family reads.



Reading abilities vary

The difficulty of the books third graders are able to read varies. However, whether it’s a picture book or chapter book, students this age should be able to read independently.

If you have concerns about your child’s reading skills, speak to his/her teacher.



Writing

In third grade, students begin to concentrate more on content: writing stories, reports, and responses to specific prompts and questions. Third graders also start to focus on writing as a process: prewriting, drafting, and revising—and they learn to edit and rewrite their work in response to feedback.

Here are some ways you can help your third grader develop and improve his/her writing skills.

- ▶ Create a “dialogue journal” (a notebook in which you and your child write back and forth to each other). Your entries can include questions for your child, stories from your life, jokes, and more. Your child can respond and do the same. This will help your child practice both reading and writing.
- ▶ Encourage your child to read his/her writing out loud to catch mistakes and see if “sounds right.”
- ▶ Have your child practice typing on a computer keyboard at home or at the library.
- ▶ Look for ways to encourage writing. Have your child write thank you notes, exchange emails with relatives (using your account), or write letters to friends.
- ▶ Ask your child to write a story or poem to read to the family.
- ▶ Encourage creative writing. Visit these websites for some fun writing prompts and story starters: journalbuddies.com and thinkwritten.com/writing-prompts-for-kids.



Math

Third graders do addition and subtraction with large numbers, work with fractions and decimals, and learn how to do multiplication and division. They often practice these skills by completing story problems.

Here are some ways to help your third grader develop and improve his/her math skills.

- ▶ Quiz your child on multiplication facts (e.g., 4×5 , 9×3) while you're eating breakfast, driving to school, or making dinner. Be sure to keep it fun and pressure-free!
- ▶ Point out decimals in everyday life, such as examining how the gallons and dollars change when pumping gas.
- ▶ Show how we use fractions every day. Ask your child to fill a glass a third of the way full or cut a sandwich into fourths.
- ▶ Have your child help you do real-world problems. For example, ask your child to count out the correct coins to pay for an item or figure out which grocery item is the best value.

Your child may be learning math very differently from how you learned it. Let your child teach you how he/she does math!

if you or your child need help with a math problem or skill, visit [khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org). This website has many excellent free online math videos.

Maintain a positive attitude

Third graders are learning many new math skills and may become frustrated at times. If your child is feeling discouraged or frustrated, provide encouragement and keep a positive attitude.

Remind your child that being good at math isn't something you're born with—math is something you learn.

Science

Third grade science varies from school to school; however, students often study the human body, the solar system, and features of the natural world (e.g., as landforms and weather). Some classes may also begin discussing physical science (e.g., forces and motion).

The best way to nurture your child's interest in science is to encourage curiosity. Explore the topics your child is interested in, and search together for answers to questions. For example, do an online search to find out why the sky is blue, or how thunder and lightning are formed.



Social Studies

In social studies, children continue learning about communities—their own community and others. Third graders may also learn about different cultures, as well as historical events and figures.

- ▶ Look for ways to relate social studies to your child's life. For example, discuss places you've visited and find them on a globe or map, or help your child draw a map of your neighborhood.
- ▶ Ask your child to tell you about what he/she is learning in social studies, and go online together to learn more about the topics your child finds most interesting.
- ▶ Have age-appropriate conversations with your third grader about current events, and ask your child for his/her opinions.



Standardized Testing

In many states, third grade is an important year for standardized testing.

This is often a student's first experience taking a standardized test.

Although tests vary from state to state and school to school, all standardized tests compare a student's achievement with state and national averages.

Schools use standardized test scores to help them improve their educational programs and to determine how much their students have learned. Student test results are given to parents; however, test scores are sometimes difficult to understand. If you ever have a question regarding test results, talk to your child's teacher or counselor.

Reduce test anxiety

Test anxiety is common for children this age, especially if they feel that they must do well on a test. If your child seems anxious, tell your third grader that standardized testing does not affect school grades, and encourage your child to just do his/her best. *Take a relaxed approach to testing. If your child senses that you're nervous about a test, it will make it more difficult for your child to stay focused and calm.*

The best way to help your third grader prepare for any test is to make sure your child gets a good night's sleep, eats a nourishing breakfast, and gets to school on time.



Work with Your Child's School

Support and work with the principals, teachers, and counselors at your school. Like you, they want your child to enjoy school and have a successful year.

Stay informed. Attend all parent programs, meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. Also, regularly check your school's website for news and updates.

- ▶ By your words and actions, show your child that doing well in school and getting a good education are very important.
- ▶ Make sure your student is in school every day, and insist that your child follow the school rules and treat everyone with respect.
- ▶ Make the most of parent-teacher conferences. Before each conference, make a list of the information you want to share, along with any questions or concerns. Also, ask your child if there is anything you should discuss with the teacher.

Talk to your child's teacher

If you have concerns about your child's progress, or if your child is having any problems with school, be sure to talk to your child's teacher.

Help Your Child Succeed

Good organizational skills and study habits will help your student succeed in third grade, and for years to come. Here's how you can help.

Help improve organizational skills



With more homework and activities, it's important for third graders to develop good organizational skills.

Organization is an area in which parents can really help their children.

- ▶ Have your child use a student planner to keep track of assignments, tests, quizzes, and anything else he/she needs to remember. Check it regularly to make sure your child is using it correctly.
- ▶ Help your child set up a home filing system for the papers you want to keep.
- ▶ Make sure your third grader has a folder for each subject. Remind your child to put all handouts, assignments, and returned tests in the appropriate folders. Loose papers should not be stuck inside books or stuffed into a backpack.
- ▶ Encourage your child to get everything ready for the next day before going to bed, and to regularly clean out his/her backpack.
- ▶ Help your child develop routines. Having a good morning and nighttime routine helps students stay organized, and makes the day run smoother.



Monitor homework

Third graders usually have nightly homework assignments. Your attitude toward homework says a lot about the value you place on education. *Make sure your child understands that you consider homework to be very important.*

- ▶ Help your child create a schedule that makes homework a part of the daily routine.
- ▶ Turn off the TV and remove as many distractions as possible. Make homework time a quiet time in your home.
- ▶ Help your child learn how to organize and prioritize homework. Ask your child to explain what needs to be done, and then help him/her develop a plan.
- ▶ Large assignments can sometimes seem overwhelming. Show your child how to break down large assignments and projects into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- ▶ Your child may occasionally ask for assistance with homework. Be available to help if your child gets stuck or wants someone to help him/her review for a test. But don't do the work yourself, and don't give more help than is requested—or needed.
- ▶ If your child has a tendency to rush through homework in order to get it done quickly, insist that you look over all completed homework.

Students must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their assignments, completing them accurately, and turning them in on time. *Parents need to make homework their child's responsibility.*

Social and Emotional Growth

Third grade students are developing important social skills.

Here are some ways to help your child develop socially and emotionally.



Provide support

The desire to fit in can make children easily influenced by their peers—and by the media messages they receive. Children with a positive self-image are better able to fend off this pressure. Provide your child with a loving, stable environment, and spend time with your child to help him/her develop a strong sense of self.

Be patient

Students this age have lots of opinions and are likely to freely share them. Third graders may also get frustrated, or even be rude, when things don't go their way. Be patient. Don't return frustration with frustration, even if it's difficult at times. Talk your child through tough situations, and remember—what may seem trivial to you might be a big deal to your third grader.

Build self confidence

Third graders take pride in their work and like to be told they did a good job. However, it's sometimes difficult for them to accept less than glowing feedback. Take every opportunity to thank your child for being helpful or doing a good job. And help your child learn to accept both positive feedback and constructive suggestions.

Help develop your child's self-esteem

As a parent, you play a vital role in promoting your child's self-esteem. First and foremost, it's important to understand that your words and actions make a difference to your child.

Parents are often quick to express disapproval, but they don't always get around to complimenting their child's behavior. Be on the lookout for situations in which your child is doing a good job or displaying a positive character trait. For example, if you like the way your child completes a chore, say something like, *"I really appreciate your help in the kitchen. You always remember to clean up any mess you make."* Give specifics to reinforce the behavior.

Children remember positive statements, so provide some words of praise and encouragement every day. Focus on your child's strengths and point out all the things he/she can do.

Laugh with your child and encourage him/her to laugh. A good sense of humor and the ability to make light of life are important ingredients for developing self-esteem.



In Closing

Helping your child have a successful year doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs.

With your encouragement, love, and support, your child is sure to be successful this year, and in the years to come.

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**Information, tips, and advice
for parents of third grade students**

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