

# FIFTH GRADE

## Parent Guidebook



# Dear Parent

Welcome to fifth grade! This is an exciting time for your child. While your fifth grader is becoming more self-sufficient and independent every day, your support and guidance continue to be very important.

This book provides the information you need to help your fifth grader not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow. With your involvement and support, they are sure to have a great 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.

# Fifth Grade Parent Guidebook

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# Introduction

Fifth graders continue to develop their skills as they start preparing for middle school. In fifth grade, students read more, learn more complex math, and have more homework. Balancing it all isn't always easy, but there are lots of ways you can help.

This book goes over what your child might study and learn in language arts, math, science, and social studies. It also provides information on the ways your child will learn and grow this year—physically, intellectually, and socially. Most importantly, this book provides a number of simple things you can do at home to help your fifth 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 fifth graders have varying skill levels, and fifth grade teachers are prepared to work with students with an array of skills and learning preferences.

# Growing Up: Fifth Grade

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## Physical Development

In fifth grade, many students begin to experience the changes that occur with puberty. This is a good time to discuss these changes, and to remind your child that everyone grows and matures at their own pace.

To help your fifth grader stay healthy and strong, have nutritious food at home, insist that they get the recommended 9–11 hours of sleep each night, and make sure they get plenty of exercise.

## Intellectual Development

Parents can help their children develop intellectually by discussing serious topics with them, giving them opportunities to express their opinions, and showing respect for their ideas.

Fifth graders now have longer attention spans, allowing them to concentrate on topics and activities for extended periods of time. While this is helpful for doing homework, fifth graders may need their parents to set time limits on TV viewing, online activities, and video game playing.

## Social Development

With an increased interest in friends and social activities, fifth graders are often self-conscious about their appearance and concerned about what their peers think of them.

To help your fifth grader develop a positive self-image and a strong sense of self, provide reassurance that they look great, and help your child find something they are good at and enjoy.



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# Fifth Grade Academics

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

## Language Arts

Fifth graders read fiction and nonfiction books. They learn how to analyze and summarize what they read, and they write reports and work on long-term projects. Fifth graders also write multi-paragraph narratives and create works of fiction.

Here are some ways you can support and encourage your child's literacy development.

- ▶ Ask your child to tell you about what they are reading in school and for pleasure. Encourage reading by getting books at the library on topics of interest to your child.
- ▶ Students this age should be able to read aloud with little stumbling or hesitation. Read a book for fun together, and take turns reading aloud. As you read, discuss characters, plots, and setting.
- ▶ Schedule family reading time—30 minutes when everyone reads.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Let your child see you reading newspapers, books, and magazines. Talk about the interesting things you've learned.
- ▶ Support all kinds of writing. Have your child write thank you notes, exchange emails with relatives, or write a story to read to the family.
- ▶ Give your fifth grader a notebook, diary, or journal and encourage them to use it daily to write down their ideas, thoughts, dreams, and goals.



## Math

Fifth graders tackle more complex math problems, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, decimals, and fractions—sometimes in the same problem. Your fifth grader may also learn some basic geometry, such as measuring angles.

### What you can do at home

**Work together on real-world problems.** For example, ask your child to help you figure out how much money to leave for a tip, determine how many miles your car gets per gallon of gas, or figure out which grocery items are the best value.

**Make math meaningful to your child.** If your child likes sports, challenge them to figure out baseball batting averages or basketball free throw percentages. If your child enjoys cooking or baking, encourage them to revise recipes for the correct number of servings for your family.

**Learn math together.** Your student may be doing math very differently from how you learned it. Ask your child to show you how they do math. If you or your child need help with a math problem or skill, visit [khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org). It has excellent free online math videos.

### Maintain a positive attitude

Fifth graders are learning many new math skills and may become frustrated at times. If your child is feeling discouraged or frustrated, keep a positive attitude and provide encouragement. Remind your child that being good at math isn't something you're born with—math is something you learn.

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## Science

Fifth grade science varies from school to school. However, in most fifth grade science classes, students begin learning the scientific method. They may conduct hands-on experiments, predict what they think will happen, and record what they find. Students also often study weather, the life cycle of plants, cells, the earth's interior (rocks, fossils, volcanoes), electricity, and more.

The best way to boost your child's skills in science is to nurture their curiosity about the world and how it works. Visit museums. Watch documentaries about nature and the natural world. Explore topics of interest, and search online together for answers to questions you don't know.



## Social Studies

Fifth grade students study a wide variety of topics, often including early civilizations, early U.S. history, the Revolutionary War, states and capitals, and the branches of government.

Ask your child to tell you about what they are learning in social studies, and go online together to learn more about the topics your child finds most interesting. Also, include your fifth grader in conversations about current events, and ask for their opinions.





## Work with Your Child's School

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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.

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**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. Also insist that they 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 their teacher(s).

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# Help Your Child Succeed

To succeed in school this year, and in the years to come, students need to be organized and have good study skills. Here's how you can help.

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## Help improve organizational skills



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

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

- ▶ Make sure your fifth grader has a folder for each subject, and 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 student to use a student planner to keep track of assignments, tests, and anything else they need to remember. Check it regularly to make sure your child is using it correctly.
- ▶ To help your fifth grader learn how to organize and prioritize homework, ask them to explain what needs to be done, and then help them develop a plan.
- ▶ Help your child establish routines that include getting every thing ready for the next day before going to bed and getting to sleep at a reasonable hour.



## Monitor homework

Fifth 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.
- ▶ Large assignments can sometimes seem overwhelming. Show your child how to break down large assignments and projects into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- ▶ Be available to help if your child is stuck or wants you to look over a report, listen to a presentation, or help them study for a test. But don't give more help than is wanted, and never do the work yourself.
- ▶ If your child consistently struggles with homework, contact their teacher(s). Work with the school to ensure that your child feels competent and capable in all of their classes.

## Promote responsibility

Students must learn to be responsible for keeping track of their assignments, completing them accurately, and turning them in on time. Parents should always be encouraging and supportive, but the completion of homework needs to be their child's responsibility.

If something doesn't get done, don't come to the rescue. If you do, your child won't feel the need to be responsible in the future.

## Encourage independent problem solving

Parents need to know what's going on at their child's school and they need to monitor their child's academic progress. It is, however, important for students to learn how to solve their own problems and take care of their own affairs.

Being able to get their questions answered and their problems resolved helps students gain confidence and become more independent. It also gives them a sense of empowerment.

In school, most problems can be resolved and most questions answered just by going to the right office or by talking to the right person. Whenever your child has a question or problem, try to help them figure out how to take care of it on their own.

*You want your child to become more independent; however, it's very important for them to know that you are always available to help.*



## Set goals

Help your child set realistic academic goals for each term. Also, set one or two goals regarding behavior, extra reading, attendance, and/or homework (such as having it all done by 8:00).

Setting goals helps your child know what your expectations are, and having goals gives your child something positive to work towards.

# Social and Emotional Growth

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**Help your fifth grader develop important social skills and stay on the “right track.”**

**Peer pressure.** While in previous years your child was striving for independence, they may now be striving for group acceptance. Peer relationships are very important to fifth graders, and your child might begin feeling the pressure to fit in. Discuss peer pressure and make sure your child knows that they don’t need to change to be liked.

**Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.** Find teachable moments to discuss the dangers of alcohol, smoking, vaping, and drugs (including over-the-counter medications). Make sure your child knows where you stand on these issues, and that you are always available to listen and answer questions.

**Bullying.** If your child ever complains about being harassed or bullied at school or online, find out what happened, and when and where it occurred. Together decide how to best handle the situation.

Young people often don’t tell their parents they’re being bullied because they’re embarrassed, worried their parents will overreact, or afraid the bully will retaliate. If you sense there’s a problem, ask your child if someone is causing them problems at school.

**Decision-making skills.** Give your child increasing opportunities to make their own decisions, such as what clothes to wear or what sport to play. Encourage your child to weigh the pros and cons of each choice, and to also consider the possible consequences. By allowing your child to make small “safe” decisions, you are helping your child develop the skills they will need to make the bigger, more important decisions later.

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## Provide limits and guidelines



**Fifth graders need their parents to provide guidelines and limits, and help them make good choices.**

- ▶ When your child leaves the house, know who they will be with, where they are going, and what they'll be doing. Require regular check-ins.
- ▶ Pay attention to the kinds of music, videos, and TV shows your child is listening to and watching. For reviews and age ratings on movies, games, and more, visit [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org).
- ▶ Base the amount of freedom you give your child on how responsible they are. Young people need to understand that they will be held accountable for their actions and behavior.
- ▶ Talk to your fifth grader about the importance of making good choices, and help them figure out what to do in specific situations. For example, discuss what they would say and do if offered a cigarette or a vape pen.
- ▶ Make sure your child knows that tech devices and online games are a privilege that can be enjoyed only if they meet your standards at home and at school.

## Teach responsibility

Give your child responsibilities around the house. Fifth graders can help prepare meals, mow the lawn, take out the garbage, or be responsible for the care of a pet.

Make sure that tasks are completed. It's important for young people to learn to finish what they start.

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## Communicate with your child

**As fifth graders become more independent and focused on peers, communication can become more challenging. Here's what you can do.**

**Ask open-ended questions.** Instead of “How was school?” say, “Tell me about your day,” or ask, “What’s that book about?”

**Show interest in what your child has to say.** Remove distractions and take time to really listen. When parents show that they’re truly interested, children are more likely to open up.

**Recognize the importance of nonverbal communication.** Young people aren’t always able to put into words what they want or need their parents to know. Pay attention to body language, moods, eating habits, sleeping patterns, and school performance.

**Make time for one-on-one activities.** It’s often easier to talk to your child when you’re doing something you both enjoy, such as cooking, watching a game, working on a car, taking a walk, or going out for ice cream. These are all great ways to engage in meaningful conversations—while spending quality time with your child.



## 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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## Parent Guidebook

Information, tips, and advice  
for parents of fifth grade students

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