

# EVERY School Year Counts

6 Ways  
A Mom Can Make This Year Count  
• Grades K-12 •



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# INTRODUCTION



Grant age 9

I am convinced my fifth child, Grant, has the most unusual school record in the country. He never went to school until he was nine years old. Then, he was in third grade twice, fourth grade once, fifth grade twice, he skipped sixth grade, and ever since seventh grade he has been spot on, progressing one grade a year. Grant has an unusual story that doesn't apply to many children in the United States and certainly doesn't apply to his four older siblings. Grant was adopted at the age of nine from a small village in Siberia and was never sent to school there. I affectionately call him my *Jungle Book* child.

I am amazed at the steep learning curve Grant had to climb to get to where he is today. Grant didn't know any of the following:

## **How to Behave in Class**

My little wilderness child had never been required to sit still, ever.

## **How to Make Good Grades**

Grant had never been evaluated for anything and actually felt frustrated with having to meet expectations.

## **How to Be Organized**

Grant had never been to a school, owned a notebook, or been required to "do" anything.

## **How to Manage Time**

Grant had never owned a watch, could not tell time, and didn't know the seasons of the year, the days of the week or even his own birthday.

## **How to Communicate**

Appropriate communication of feelings and needs is tough for any child, let alone one who couldn't speak English.

## **How to Make Friends**

Making friends took Grant the longest. We have a socially sophisticated culture that does not demonstrate much grace to the child that falls outside the parameters of what we have defined as "normal."

Every school year was really important for bringing Grant up to speed. Your child probably doesn't have these hurdles, but they may have others.

**I believe *every school year* is important for *every child*.**

# Every Child Needs a Parent to HELP

**Do you want  
your child  
to excel in  
school?**

**Do you want  
your child to  
go to college?**

**Do you want  
your child to  
develop a  
passion for  
learning?**

Every school year counts, and as a parent you have to make it count for the good. Because if you don't navigate your child's educational progress, who will? You cannot rely on someone else to watch out for your child. Teachers are busier every year. Schools are overcrowded, behavioral problems have escalated, and teachers have more responsibilities and fewer planning periods. If you want this year in your child's education to really count, you have to help make it happen. You are your child's best advocate.

Excelling in school gets more complicated with each grade. Your child will have to know **how to behave in class** and **how to make good grades**.

Getting into the college of your choice gets more competitive every year. There are a great number of scholarships available, and a scholarship can be a great financial help, but you need to plan now. Your child will have to know **how to be organized** and **how to manage time** to get into the college of choice or to stay eligible and competitive for scholarships.

A passion for education is an incredible motivator. Research shows that high school students who are involved in their school do better academically. Strong relationships at school will enhance your child's involvement and academics. Your child will need to learn **how to communicate** with teachers and with classmates. Your child will need to know **how to make friends**.

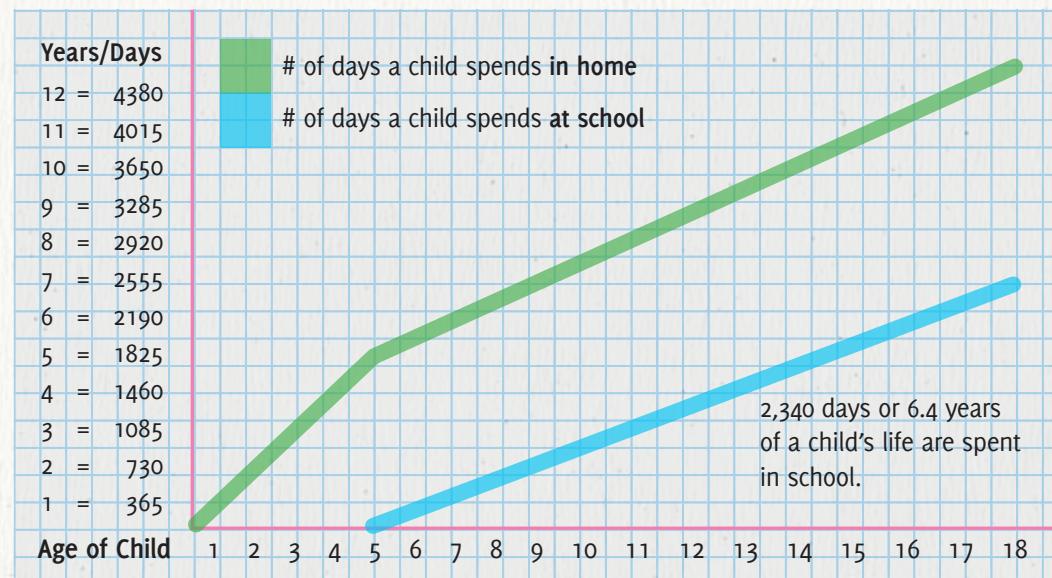


**2,340 Days  
in School =**

## a Future of Opportunity

Your children will spend roughly 2,340 days, or 6.4 years of their life in school from kindergarten through twelfth grade. That's why school is the laboratory of life. It is the opportunity to learn about more than just academics. It is where they will spend half of their days for twelve years. It is a test tube for academic, social, and emotional growth.

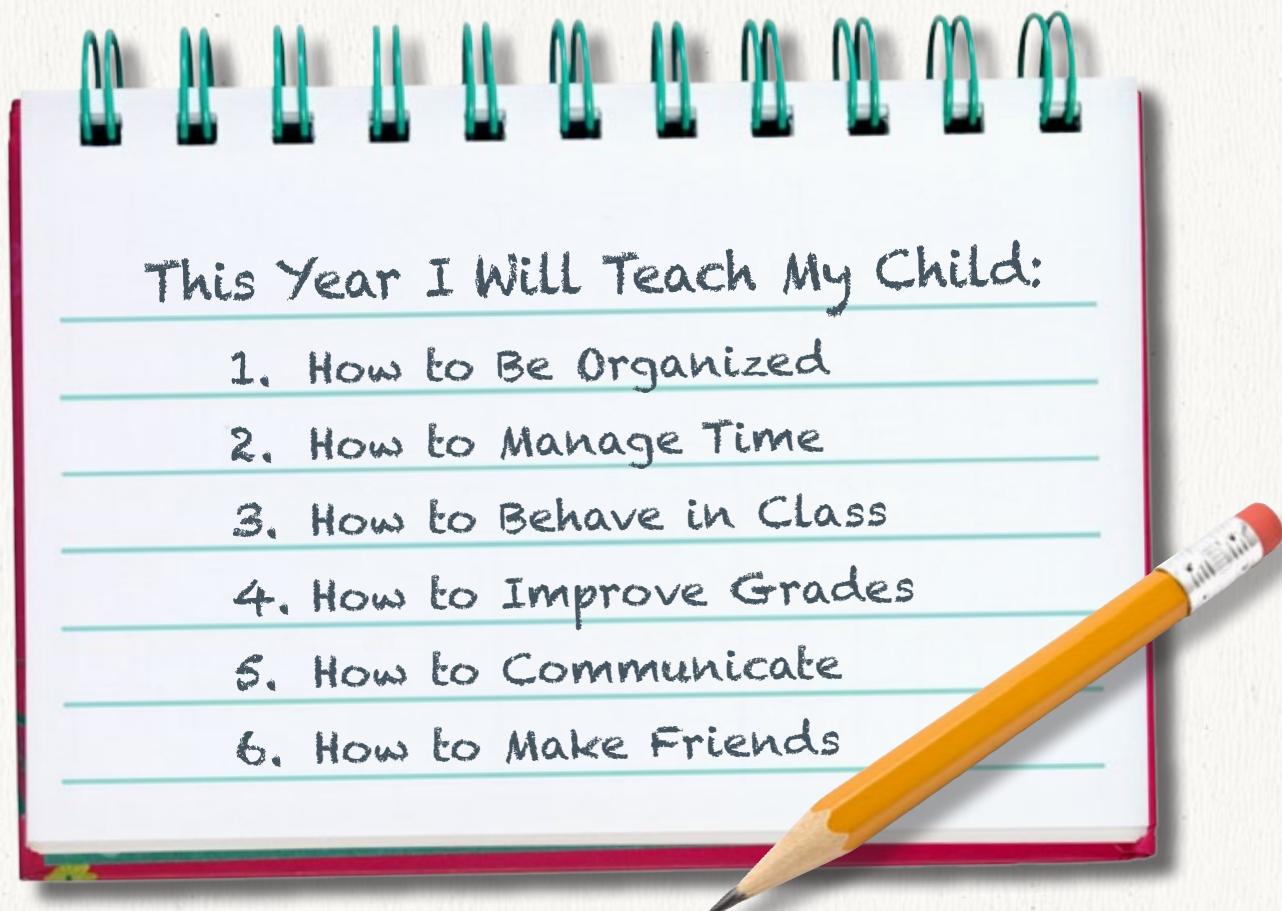
School is a huge investment of your child's time. Therefore, as the executor of your child's future, it is an investment you will want to manage to ensure the best possible return for your child's investment – a bright future of opportunity.



School is the laboratory of life for your child. Too much experimentation, without parental supervision, and your child might blow up.

# 6 Ways a Mom Can Teach Her Child

There are six ways you can make every year count for your child starting with this year. It will require attention on your part and learning on the part of your child. But as a parent, you are your child's #1 teacher and only you have the privilege to train your child from birth to 18. Even with 18 years, it won't be easy—but when I look at how far Grant has come in just eight years, I know you can do amazing things with the time you have with your child. To make this year count, you must teach your child the following six lessons:



# Lesson ONE

## Teach Your Child How to BE ORGANIZED

"Honey, you're late. Let's go!"

"Mom, I can't find my shoes."

"Mom, I can't find my math homework."

"Mom, I forgot I have a field trip and I can't find my permission slip."

Most children are naturally unorganized and a little chaotic. They're easily distracted and have trouble focusing on more than one thing at a time. Wet towels are forgotten on the floor, books are left at school, and projects are deferred until the night before due date. Some children will naturally learn to focus on tasks as they mature, but others may need help. The sooner your child develops the habit of staying organized, the better off he will be in years to come.

Experts agree that organization is a learned skill. Children must be trained to follow a system that is age-appropriate, and encouraged to implement it with consistency. Even very young children can be taught to participate in family and personal organization! The benefits of training your child to be organized with schoolwork and other responsibilities are immeasurable. You'll be preparing your child to handle, with growing independence, the increasing demands of school and paving the way for life-long success and confidence. The complexity of schoolwork and demand for organization increases with each grade. If a child can't stay organized, it will begin to impact his work and eventually his grades. Teaching your child how to be organized will also take stress out of your daily routine, because the more he can do himself, the less you have to do for him. It's a win-win scenario.

Your wish as a mom is for your children to become the best versions of themselves they possibly can be – for them to be happy and successful and to have pride in their accomplishments. Showing your child how to be organized will give him a permanent work ethic and confidence in his abilities, as well as teaching him the plentiful rewards of a job well-done.



Back to School...  
Ready or not;  
here it comes!

# What You Can Do to Teach Organization

Here are a few to-dos to instill the seeds of personal responsibility and great organizational skills in your children:

## 1. Get Your Child Started

- **Organize Your Child's Room**

Organization doesn't just happen; it is an intentional habit. To develop that habit in your child, you will have to get him started and set aside time to re-organize every week.

- **Organize Where Your Child Will Do Homework**

Having an organized, well-supplied space to do work will improve your child's efficiency.

- **Organize Your Child's Backpack and Notebooks**

In the rush of the day, kids will just stuff the backpack. Purge and organize daily.

## 2. Require Your Child to Stay Organized With Accountability

Younger children thrive on immediate reinforcement. Older children who have learned to create lists adjust to the rigors of advanced grades with more success. Use these printables to get your child started. Older children can make their own list of Daily Do's and carry it with them or take a picture of it on their phone to refer to the next day when at school.

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# Lesson **TWO**

## Teach Your Child How to **MANAGE TIME**

The key to teaching your children how to manage their time is to help them prioritize. What are the things that your family values most? If it is family time, how much of a priority do you give to having a weekly family night? How often does your family eat dinner together? As you help your children manage their time, think about what is important enough to commit time to each day, whether it is quiet time with God, family time, school studies, extra-curricular activities, or just play time.

Next, help them examine how they actually spend their time. If getting good grades is a top priority, but they spend more time playing video games than studying, then they will need to adjust their schedule. Or if they have so many activities planned that there is no down time or family time, consider cutting back their commitments to allow for more free time.

*"Lost time is never found again."*

- Benjamin Franklin



# What You Can Do to Teach Time Management

## • **Routines Rule**

Routines, especially during the school year, should be the rule. Establish a family bedtime, prayer time, mealtime, study-time, and stick to it. If that means homework before playtime, then set the standard and don't budge. If your children are older, they will balk at the new rules but you can be stronger to weather the storm of protest.

## • **Calendar Everything**

Busy families are always on the go. Seeing what is coming can help you know when to say no to a few things. Use the free printable calendar here to fill in your family's activities and post it in the kitchen where you and the kids can review and add to it daily.

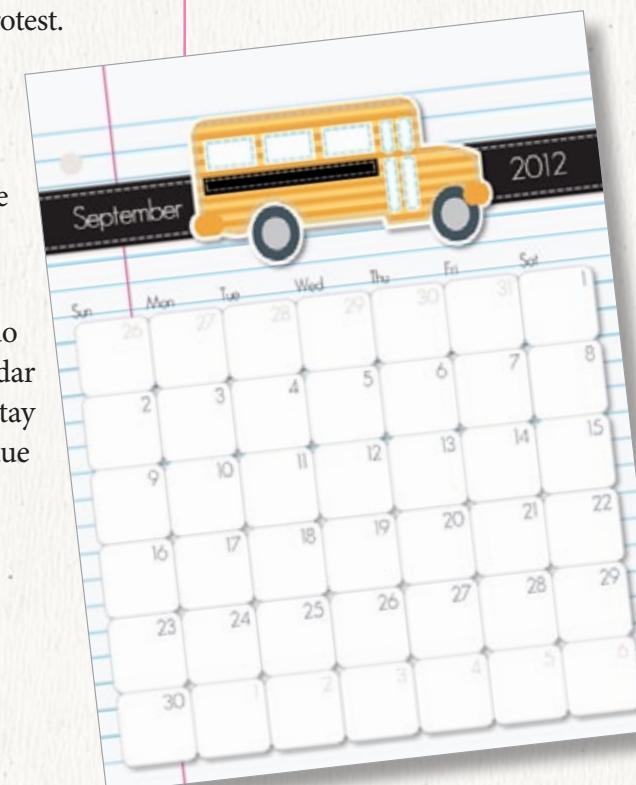
## • **Use Planners**

Teach your children how to use a planner of their own. Younger children do better with a physical planner. Teach your older child how to use the calendar in their smart phone to track assignments and extra-curricular activities. Stay ahead of schedules by reviewing your children's assignments and posting due dates of large school projects on the family calendar.

## • **Limit Screen Time**

It is no secret that children are spending too much time watching TV, playing video games, or playing on their computer or phone. The distraction will quickly eat up time and keeping them from it will make a mom crazy. Read iMOM's [5 Screen Time Rules You Must Have](#) to help control screen time in your family.

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# Lesson THREE

## Teach Your Child How to BEHAVE IN CLASS

Classroom behavior is crucial to classroom success. An ill-behaved student can wear a teacher out by the end of year and greatly disrupt the classroom dynamic. Your child will need to learn two character qualities to behave well in any situation. They are **self-control** and **respect** for others. With these qualities, your child will be prepared to find favor in any and every situation with good behavior.



**self-con•trol** <)) noun \-kan'-tōl\

: restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires

– self-controlled < adjective

**<sup>1</sup>re•spect** <)) noun \ri'-spekt\

a : high or special regard : ESTEEM

b : the quality or state of being esteemed

"Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright."

- Proverbs 20:11

# What You Can Do to Teach Self-Control

Every successful student must be taught to control his or her behavior. The trait of self-control is so crucial to success that in 1972, Stanford University conducted a study called the Marshmallow Experiment. The study was conducted on hundreds of 4 - 6 year old children. In the study, each child was led into a room, empty of distractions, where a marshmallow sat on a table. The children were told they could eat the marshmallow, but if they waited 15 minutes to eat the marshmallow they would be rewarded with a second one.

In video taken and posted on YouTube from subsequent similar studies, it is amusing to watch the children fight to exercise self-control. Some children would cover their eyes with their hands or turn around so that they couldn't see the marshmallow. Others kicked the table or tugged on their pigtails. Some went so far as to smell the marshmallow and even lick it, while others would simply eat the marshmallow as soon as the researchers left.

One third of the children were able to resist the temptation to eat the marshmallow. Researchers followed those children to see whether or not doing so had an effect on their future success. The children who were able to defer gratification and exercise self-control were significantly more competent and had higher SAT scores. The characteristic remained with them for life. The lesson, of course, is that it may be more important to teach your pre-schooler self-control than the ABC's and 123's. And if your child is older, researchers say it is never too late to learn self-control – so start teaching.

## 5 Simple Ways to Teach Self-Control

Self-control must be taught with daily consistency. Self-control, at the basic level, is the ability to tell yourself "no." If your child can say no to doing what he wants and learn to obey, he will do well in school.

1. Teach your child to obey the first time you ask.
2. Teach your child to wait patiently for food, his turn in games, or a privilege.
3. Teach your child to explore with his eyes not his hands.
4. Teach your child to listen without interrupting and to think before he speaks.
5. Teach your child to ask permission before doing something when in doubt.

Every child will struggle in some area of self-control. Encourage your child to master that area by using the *You Can Do It* chart and reward him when he does.

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# What You Can Do to Teach Respect for Others

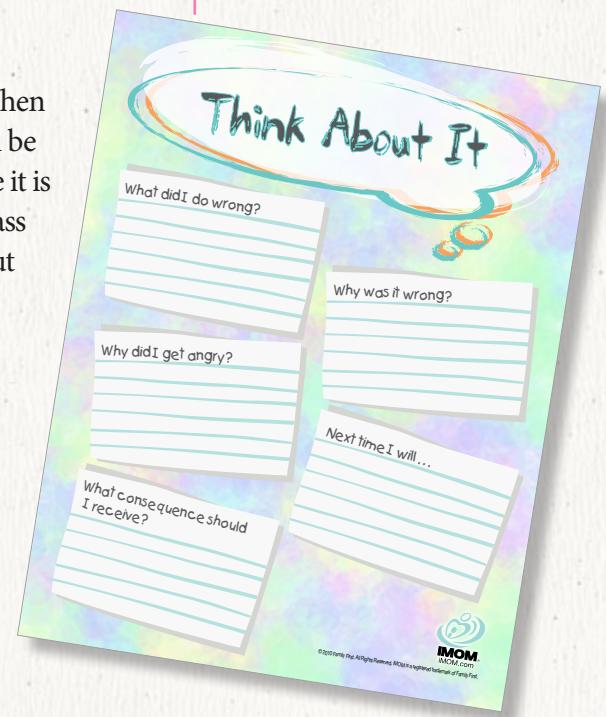
The other half of good classroom behavior is learning how to respect others. When a child learns **self-control**, he learns how to control himself knowing that it will be good for him. When a child learns **respect**, he learns to control himself because it is good for others. For example, a child will learn that he should not talk out in class simply because he will get in trouble. He should learn that he should not talk out in class out of respect for others because it is disruptive and unfair to his fellow students.

Respect must be modeled and taught at home. In your conversations and interactions with your children and spouse, you can teach respect. When you instruct your child in the *5 Ways to Teach Self-Control*, explain to them why the behavior is so important and what would happen if students lacked self-control and respect.

Good manners are the fruit of a self-controlled, respectful child. Teaching manners will advance your child even more.

- [Manners: 10 Specific Manners Your Kids Need to Know](#)
- [Manners: How to Have a Hallway Hero](#)

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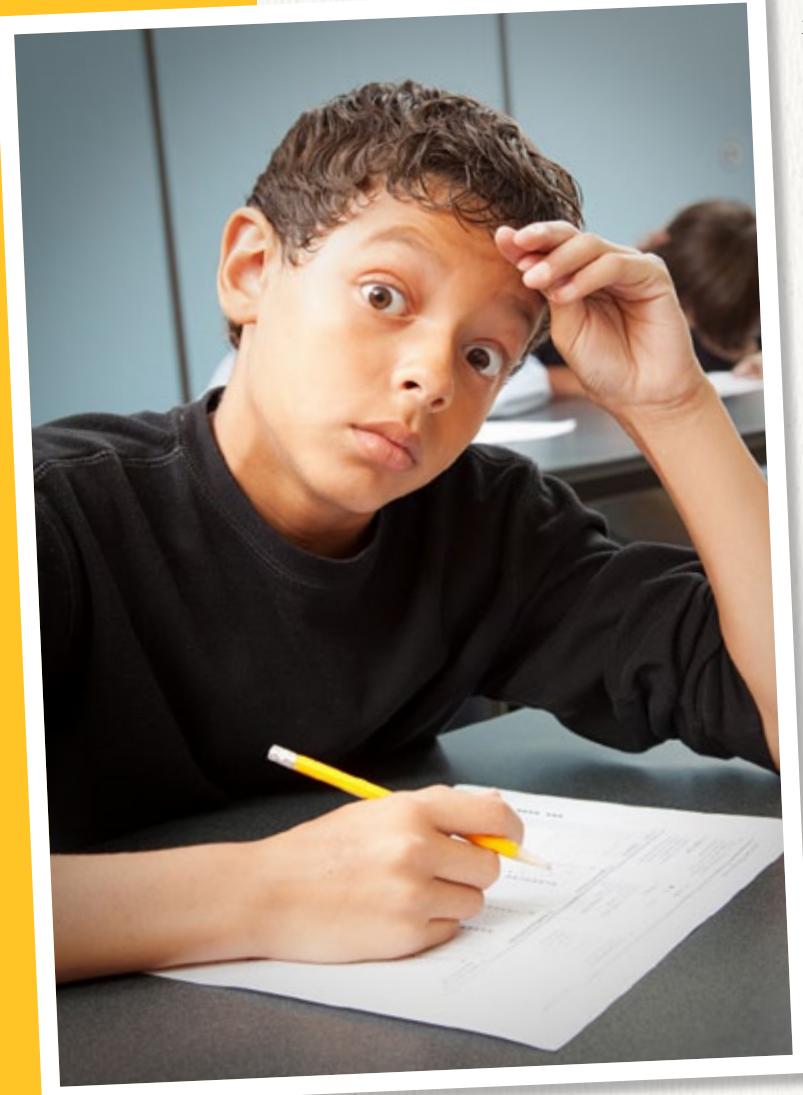
# Lesson **FOUR**

## Teach Your Child How to IMPROVE GRADES

All three of the previous lessons - *how to be organized, how to manage time*, and *how to behave* will help to improve your child's grades. But many times a child may struggle

with a particular subject or teaching style. This is not necessarily a crisis situation. One of my children experienced this early on so I met with her 25-year veteran teacher and received some wise information. She said children grow in three areas –physically, emotionally, and academically – but not always at the same time. Some are balanced in growth and others leap in one area and then another. A child may struggle one year and totally get it the next. She said the trick was to keep them confident despite difficulties and to keep an eye on problem areas that don't resolve.

Whether a child has problem areas or has chosen an advanced track, good study habits are the key to improving grades. Teach your child how to fight for good grades with hard work and a confident attitude. There are so many ways to do that depending on the child and the difficulty of class, but the study habits below are the basics for helping every child improve his grades.



*"As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in schools."*

*- Author Unknown*

# What You Can Do to Teach Your Child to Improve Grades

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- 1. Set the time for daily studying:** Structure is always important. Designate a specific timeframe for homework to be completed. Creating a regular routine will increase productivity. Go to parent/teacher conferences.
- 2. Stay informed:** Most schools offer online services to check on grades, homework assignments, and overall progress. Keep yourself up to date on all of these things.
- 3. The proper setting:** Provide a quiet location that is readily available. This can be a challenge when there are younger siblings who are free to play. Make the older child's studies a respected priority.
- 4. Limit distractions:** Our homes are filled with distractions. Televisions, cell phones, and video games just to name a few. The use of these items should not be allowed during homework time. The mind should be focused on the task at hand.
- 5. Be a cheerleader:** Always show support and give encouragement. Reward strong effort as well as results. We want our children to always give their best.
- 6. Provide guidance:** We all get stumped sometimes. Make sure helpful resources are available when needed. These might include yourself, school-provided telephone services, or school-approved online assistance. A child should always be able to ask a question and get an answer.
- 7. Work first:** Just like their parents, children have busy lives these days. Homework should always come before sports and social activities. Make sure education is the number one priority.
- 8. Notes:** Make sure your child develops an excellent note-taking system. Experts believe an outline form of note-taking is the most efficient method. However, all children are different, so just make sure they have a system that works for them.
- 10. Plan ahead:** Tests and projects require plenty of planning. Provide tips and techniques that will bring the top-notch results that are desired.

# Lesson **FIVE**

## Teach Your Child How to **COMMUNICATE**

Communication is a skill for life long success. It is not always easy, especially for a child.

There are many reasons children struggle to communicate. You can help your child overcome and master communication by recognizing communication struggles and coaching your child through them. Here are common communication weaknesses in children:

- **Shyness**
- **Speech delays**
- **Fear**
- **Confusion**
- **Difficulty processing thoughts**
- **Verbal impulsiveness**
- **Discouragement**



"Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple."

- Dr. Seuss

# What You Can Do to Teach Your Child to Communicate



You can help your child learn to communicate in lots of ways.

## 1. Practice.

Once you have identified your child's communication weakness, practice with them to overcome it. The best way to practice communication is to engage in conversation with your child often. Bedtime, carpool time, and mealtime are ideal for strategically proposing conversations. Use one of the free printable Talk Conversation Starters to get started.

## 2. Don't speak for your child.

I have failed in this area more times than I can count. My child is asked a question and rather than let him struggle to find the words to answer, I jump in for him. Patiently wait or rephrase the question if it will help his understanding, but let him try to answer.

## 3. Encourage a teacher-student relationship.

Teach your child to do thoughtful things for his teacher. This will help your child feel comfortable approaching the teacher.

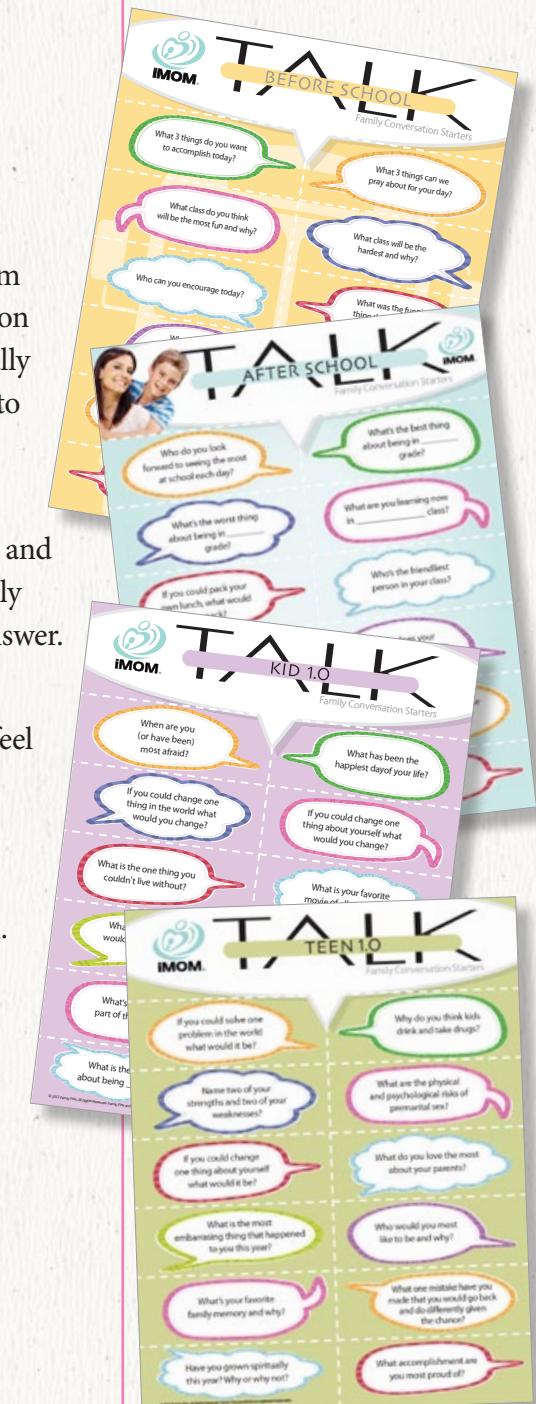
## 4. Encourage your child to advocate for himself.

When your child has a problem, teach him how to approach the problem by communicating with others whether it is with a teacher, a coach, or other children.

## 5. Be perceptive.

Tune in to your child daily so that you might perceive and head off potential problems that simply need to be communicated and resolved with understanding.

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# Lesson **SIX**

## Teach Your Child How to **MAKE FRIENDS**

Friends are vital to a child's positive outlook about school. Research shows that children who lack friends can suffer from emotional and mental difficulties later in life. Friendships help children develop emotionally and morally. While interacting with friends, children learn social skills such as how to communicate, cooperate, and solve problems. They practice controlling their emotions and responding to the emotions of others. They develop the ability to evaluate and negotiate different situations that arise in their relationships. Having friends even affects children's school performance. Children tend to have better attitudes about school and learning when they have friends there.

*"Young people with strong, supportive relationships with families, friends, school, and community are invested in or committed to achieving the goals held by these groups. They are bonded to these groups. Young people who are bonded are less likely to do things that threaten that bond – such as use drugs, become violent, or commit crimes."*

- National Council on Crime and Delinquency & Developmental Research and Programs, Inc., U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).



"one is the loneliest  
number."

-Three Dog Night

# What You Can Do to Help Your Child Make Friends

I believe there is a good friend for every child. What most often kept my children from finding a friend was that they were chasing after the wrong friends. You can help direct them in the following ways:

## 1. Teach friendship skills

- Model consideration and thoughtfulness.
- Set clear rules for appropriate behavior.
- Teach sharing and compromising.
- Teach realistic expectations for young friendships.
- Encourage showing support and appreciation for others.
- Teach inclusion.

## 2. Help your child make connections

- Arrange play dates.
- Participate in after-school programs, scouts, and church youth groups.
- Develop creative or athletic interests.

## 3. Be your child's #1 self-confidence booster

- Listen to and love your child.
- Enlist grandparents and other relatives to encourage and spend time with your child.
- Let teachers and coaches know if your child needs encouragement.

## 4. Teach your child the making friends steps:

- **Smile** - so people will know you are friendly

*When you smile, it instantly tells people you are friendly.*

- **Compliment** - so people will know you like them

*Tell the child what you like about him or mention something he did well.*

- **Ask Questions** - so people will know you are interested in them

*Have 1 or 2 questions to ask people about themselves.*

- **Respond Positively** - so people will know you can be a good friend

*Make positive comments about their answers.*



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# What You Need to Know



## Know Your Child:

1. Who are your child's best friends?
2. Do you know their parents?
3. Do you know what your child's friends are permitted to do by their parents? For example, what movies, video games, websites, language, morality, and lifestyle choices are acceptable in their home?
4. Is there adequate parental supervision in their home?
5. What personality types make the best friends for your child?

## Know the Signs of a Child in Social Distress:

Eighty percent of all children in school usually have at least one friend. It is the other twenty percent of children that psychologists are concerned about. These children may have no friends at all. They fall into three categories: overlooked children (5%); controversial children (5%); and rejected children (10%). Overlooked children tend to be very shy, very close to their families, and good students. They don't attract much attention from their peers. Controversial children may have some traits that their peers like, but they also have unacceptable habits — being a poor sport or having poor hygiene, for example. Rejected children are often overly aggressive from the start and react to being rejected with more aggression, or they become depressed and withdrawn.

Overlooked children learn good relational skills at home and will most often overcome shyness with maturity. Controversial children need to be coached to correct their unacceptable habits. Rejected, angry children may need counseling. For controversial and rejected children, it is crucial that parents find friendships in other venues: youth groups, sports teams, community service projects, or with cousins and neighbors. School administrators can make a huge difference in the lives of at-risk children, so be sure to talk to teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators about help they can offer. It only takes one real friend to alleviate the worst aspects of loneliness for a child.

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# Meet the Author Susan Merrill



Susan Merrill is a wife, mother of five, director of iMOM.com, [want-to-be blogger](#), author of *"The Passionate Mom,"* (releasing March 2013, Thomas Nelson), and the very imperfect, Merrill family manager. She loves to analyze life, ponder possibilities, and pray for opportunity. She truly believes that all things are possible if one is willing to persevere through trials, seek the truth, and boldly embrace new and unique solutions. That belief has led her down some interesting parenting paths including adopting two older children the exact ages of two of her biological children, the delicate diplomacy of living with diverse personalities, exploring and experiencing every type of school imaginable for every type of child, and parenting special needs in our not so special-need oriented world. Susan lives in Tampa, Florida with her handsome hubby, author and President of Family First, Mark Merrill, and two, or depending on the day, up to five of her children ages 16 - 22. On those days, she loves having a valid excuse to ditch all of her responsibilities to run a bed and breakfast / Laundromat for college students.

If you loved *Every School Year Counts*, you'll find hundreds more "just what you're looking for" [mom resources](#) and [free printables](#) at [iMOM.com](#). They'll help inspire and encourage you to be the best mom you can be! iMOM is a program of the not-for-profit [Family First](#).