

“Help me set little ones up for success!”

The new school year is here—and so are our experts with the proven ways to help you help the child in your life feel extra-confident

Encourage reading skills

Create DEAR time!

Reading for pleasure is linked with academic achievement, notes educator Ann K. Dolin—that’s why she loves DEAR: Drop Everything And Read. “Once a week, the whole family reads whatever they want at the same time,” she explains. “In my house, we pile into the sunroom with books and popcorn. It gets kids excited about reading!”



Try a bigger font!

The simple strategy that’s super-effective: Just enlarge the letters on the page! “Studies show the size of the font really impacts how much kids enjoy reading,” says Dolin. “If you have a Kindle or an iPad, for example, experiment with font sizes—bigger usually is better for kids than traditional sizes.”

Spark the #1 success trait!

The best predictor of success isn’t high IQ—it’s curiosity, according to a recent study. And

igniting that spark is as easy as asking kids a few questions when you read with them, says education expert Denise Pope, Ph.D. “Simply encouraging them to predict what’s going to happen next in the story, for example, gets them passionate about learning,” she notes.

Build math confidence

Play “Times Tables Toss”!

Just throw a ball to help kids learn times tables, urges Dolin. “For example, yell out, 5×3 , and when they catch the ball, they’ll give you the answer, toss it back to you, and so on,” she says. “Getting up and moving is proven to help kids learn faster.”

Sneak in everyday math!

It’s easier than you think to make math fun and real-world relatable, promises professor of education Cathy Vatterot, Ph.D. “Anything from playing cards to doubling a recipe to figuring out how much space you need in your garden together helps foster math skills,” she says.

Help them study smarter

Click *this homework helper!*

“I ask middle and high school students all the time for ways they like to study, and they



mention Quizlet.com over and over again,” reveals Dolin. “The free website and app, geared to kids 11 years old and up, is especially great for reluctant studiers because it makes learning fun by generating games, flash cards and practice tests on every subject from algebra to history.” Proof it works: 95% of students who use Quizlet show improved grades!

Help them lock in what they’ve learned!

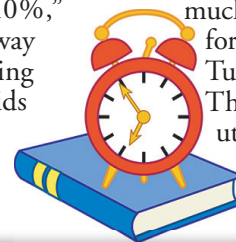
“After 24 hours, we tend to forget about half of what we’ve just learned—and after a week, we retain only 10%,” says Dolin. The easy way to reverse the “forgetting curve”: “Encourage kids to go over their notes within 24 hours after

Melt kids’ stress with PDF!

Play, downtime and family time (PDF) are the three most important factors associated with healthier, happier kids, reveals Pope. “Unstructured play a few times a week, for example, fosters independence, while downtime sparks creativity, and family time—from playing board games to having family dinners—is linked with greater resilience in and out of the classroom.”

taking them, and again a few minutes each day for a week to help lock in new information,” she urges. Also smart? “Instead of cramming on Thursday for a test on Friday, students are much better off studying for, say, 20 minutes on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday—called ‘distributed learning,’ it’s proven to lead to success!”

—Kristina Mastrocola



Our expert panel



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Denise Pope, Ph.D., a senior lecturer at Stanford University Graduate School of Education, is cofounder of Challenge Success, a project aimed at reducing academic stress.



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