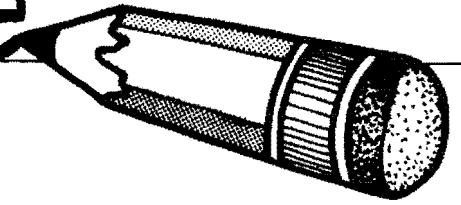


Parenting Pipeline



A newsletter for parents of second-grade children
from Iowa State University Extension



Supporting Your Child

Positive feedback is a very effective way to motivate children and help them feel good about who they are. When giving positive feedback, let the child know why she is receiving it — and mean what you say. It is important to be specific and sincere.

Avoid saying, “Johnny, you have done a good job.” Say specifically what he did. “Johnny, you did a good job on your addition and subtraction tables.” Being too general with positive feedback may appear phony to the child.

Goals of Misbehavior

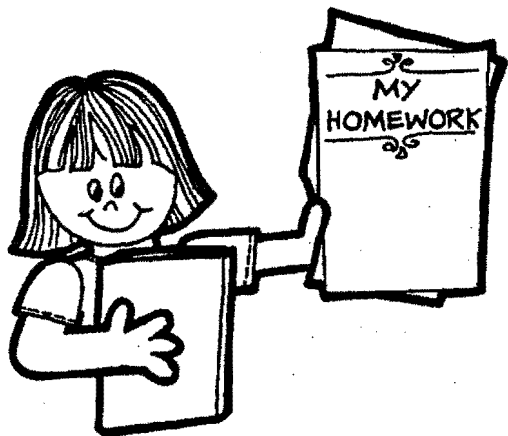
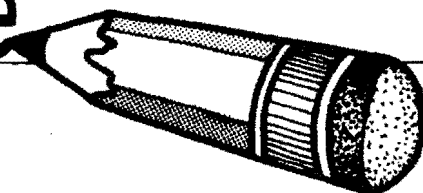
When problems occur, ask yourself what the underlying cause of the misbehavior might be.

Child's goal	Child's faulty belief	Parent feeling and reaction	Child's response	Alternatives
Attention	I belong only when I am being noticed or served.	FEELING: Annoyed REACTION: Tendency to remind and coax.	Temporarily stops misbehavior. Later resumes same behavior or disturbs in another way.	Ignore misbehavior when possible. Give attention for positive behavior when child is not making a bid for it. Avoid undue service. Realize that reminding, punishing, rewarding, coaxing and service are undue attention.
Power	I belong only when I am in control or am proving no one can boss me!	FEELING: Angry, provoked, as if one's authority is threatened. REACTION: Tendency to fight or to give in.	Active- or passive-aggressive misbehavior is intensified, or child submits with defiant compliance.	Withdraw from conflict. Help child see how to use power constructively by appealing for child's help and enlisting cooperation. Realize that fighting or giving in only increases child's desire for power.
Revenge	I belong only by hurting others as I feel hurt. I cannot be loved.	FEELING: Deeply hurt. REACTION: Tendency to retaliate and get even.	Seeks further revenge by intensifying behavior or choosing another weapon.	Avoid feeling hurt. Avoid punishment and retaliation. Build trusting relationship; convince child that she/he is loved.
Display of Inadequacy	I belong only by convincing others not to expect anything from me. I am unable; I am helpless.	FEELING: Despair; hopelessness. "I give up." REACTION: Tendency to agree with child that nothing can be done.	Passively responds or fails to respond to whatever is done. Shows no improvement.	Stop all criticism. Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small; focus on assets, don't be hooked into pity, and don't give up.

R. Dreikurs, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) Program, American Guidance Service.

Parenting Pipeline

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Helping With Homework

"Dad! Mom! I have homework tonight!"

As a parent, how do you react? Do you immediately feel a headache coming on, or do you think of this as your chance to share a few minutes of private time with your child?

If you choose to take an active interest in the homework, you will enjoy:

- exploring areas of your child's school world
- visiting about the day's activities
- getting a glimpse of your child's learning patterns and abilities

Spending time together on homework shows the child that you value school and learning. Sit down and review the assignment; then check the progress

when she is done. Have your child tell you what she did and why. This will give the child a chance to work through the problem solving again. Parents should not give answers or do work for children, but your active interest will help your child get positive results. And knowing what your child is studying will help you explain what is learned in school and how it relates to your family life and to the world.

Young children are usually proud to have homework. As they progress into higher grades, they may find homework less appealing because it interferes with more attractive activities, like being with friends. Set the stage now for homework.

Set aside a time and a place for homework. The kitchen table right before or after dinner is a favorite homework scene for many families.

Be careful not to bribe your child. Homework is a natural part of being a student. If you make it a priority, your child will do the same.

Science experiments are often a child's first homework. A parent may need to help the child obtain supplies and do simple experiments at home. These may be reported on in school. Children are more interested in the world about them if they can

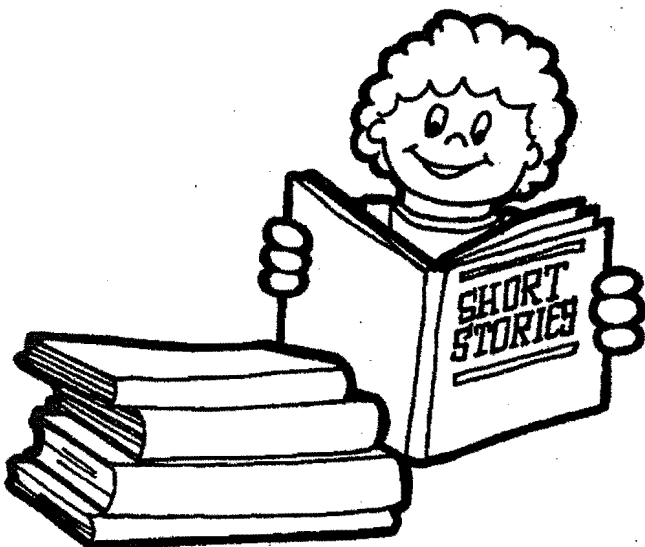




contribute. Children learn best from active involvement with their learning. Reading a text or hearing a lecture is a part of learning, too, but not as effective at this age as the involvement process.

Spelling is another common homework assignment. Five minutes of spelling each night can help a child master this skill. Help the child identify spelling words in conversations by making an effort to use them. Be sure to post the weekly successes on the refrigerator or bulletin board to show your interest and pride. Do not expect perfection. Expect a best effort.

Reading to children or having them read to you aloud is a painless way to improve pronunciation and develop voice control. Children learn what is important by watching their parents. Encourage them to read and let them see you read. Set aside a regular reading time — without the TV! It may be a Sunday afternoon or after-dinner activity for the whole family.



Parents' active interest in homework does not ensure a straight A student. Each child has different abilities. Talk to your children about their work and let them know you want them to do their best, whatever that may be. Show that you love them regardless of how they do. Respect their individual levels of development and capabilities.

Some teachers and schools do not use A-B-C grades for this age. Grades are not the focus at this age. Not all children can get A's, B's and C's, but all can get the top marks in effort and behavior. You could be surprised to find that simply providing parental support can improve grades. Most teachers welcome your questions and interest in your child's progress.

Visits, telephone calls and notes to the teacher will help keep lines of communication open between you, your child and the world of school. Volunteering to help when parental input is requested will also make you more familiar with the school scene. It will demonstrate the importance of school activities to your child.

A child's values are reinforced through a parent's example. Valuing education can be an important outcome of your interest and involvement.

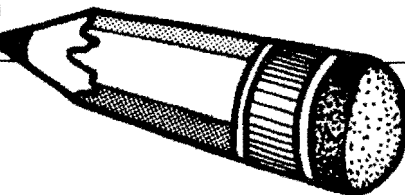
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Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade children
from Iowa State University Extension*

Welcome to Parenting Pipeline.

Parents want to help their children build self-esteem, develop creativity and reach physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your fourth-grader. It will be distributed each month of the school year.

Responsibility and independence are the major differences between primary and intermediate grades. It becomes the child's responsibility to complete daily assignments and homework on time. Homework helps your child learn to work and think independently, a major development for children this age.

In the primary grades, your child was learning to read. In the intermediate grades, your child is reading to learn. Reading is a tool through which children will learn about subjects. Continue to encourage reading for enjoyment by reading to and with children at home.

Settling into a structured school day may be difficult for children after a carefree summer. Help make this transition easier by making sure your fourth-grader is getting plenty of rest, a nutritious diet and a little extra nurturing.

Supporting Your Child

Parents play a crucial role in providing their children with the values and skills essential for success in school and in later life. To motivate children to do their best, parents need to:

- **Relate personal experiences** and family stories that reinforce the message that effort, persistence and good character count.
- **Give children responsibilities** at home to foster self-reliance, industriousness, resourcefulness.

- **Teach children to plan ahead** by requiring them to place schoolwork and household chores before play.
- **Recognize and encourage positive behavior, efforts and performance** as well as correcting misconduct.
- **Encourage children to work to the best of their abilities in school** and to make the effort needed to succeed in their studies.
- **Establish family rules** (by such things as setting curfews and restricting activities during the school week) that provide youngsters with structure and a guide to their actions.
- **Expect to see homework assignments.** Parents should question their children if homework appears to be too excessive. Fourth grade is a time to introduce children to homework and help them adjust to being responsible for their work. Homework should not be given every day. Fourth graders need to adjust gradually without being overwhelmed.
- **Make effective use of leisure time** at home. Talk to children about their experiences to help them extract meaning from events. This skill is important to success at school. Also, limit the amount of time children spend watching television and monitor their choice of programs.
- **Show support for the school** and teachers. Get children to school on time, regularly and with needed schoolwork and supplies. Support school disciplinary measures, and work with the school to meet the child's needs. Get to know the teachers, attend school meetings and contact the school with concerns.
- **Learn about the school's expectations and practices** by talking directly with the principal and teachers and visiting the classroom.
- **Join with other parents to improve the school.** A group of parents working together, such as through PTA, is more effective than just one person. Volunteer to spend time at school at least once during the year to read a story, chaperone a field trip, or teach a special lesson or science experiment. Teachers appreciate support and your children will know you value their education.

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Families and schools working together provide the best possible environment for the schooling of children.

Understanding Your Fourth-Grader

Your fourth-grader is a unique individual but has specific characteristics common to this age.

Nine-Year-Old Traits

- learning to take responsibility for his own actions
- high energy, often playing to the point of fatigue
- showing signs of being more responsible, inner directed, an independent worker
- able to plan and organize
- inconsistent appetite and sleep patterns
- poor posture
- less interested in fantasy, more involved in the real world
- appreciates being trusted
- overly concerned with performances, wants to please
- boys enjoy staying unkempt, girls are very concerned about their appearance
- peer conformity in dressing is important
- sets high standards and gets down on himself when he doesn't achieve them
- is easily upset
- begins hero worship of older members of the same sex
- lots of physical habitual movements: fingers in hair, slouching, picking at nails
- is concerned about right and wrong, being fair.

Helping Children Solve Their Problems

Children of all ages experience problems that require the guidance of an adult. Parents can give children the ability to recognize, solve and cope with their problems.

A fourth-grader may have experienced problems in previous grades, such as friendship problems, and now has new concerns, such as managing homework. Together you can work toward solutions.

Problem solving is a process that takes time and effort. Teach your child that no problem is so great that it cannot be handled by working together.

Problem-Solving Steps

The adult's job is to help the child remain focused on the problem-solving process.

1. Gather Data

Collect information about events and feelings. Avoid blaming. Ask: What happened? How did you feel? What happened next?

2. State the Problem Clearly

It's easier to solve a problem if your child has a clear understanding of it.

Example: You want to _____ and your friend wants to _____.
What can you do so you both will be happy?

3. Generate Ideas

Go for quantity. List as many as possible. Encourage all ideas, silly and practical. Avoid criticizing ideas. Review the problem often to generate thought.

4. Evaluate Ideas

Consider all ideas. Help your child learn to distinguish between good and poor ideas. Examine consequences of each by using, "What might happen if you _____?" or "How will Mary feel if you _____?"

5. Ask for a Decision and Help the Child Plan

Look at the list of alternatives and ask for a decision. Help implement the idea by asking, "What do you need to do first?" Plan time to evaluate. If the solution is not working, try again. Congratulate your child for his efforts and for working toward a solution. Avoid fixing things for your child.

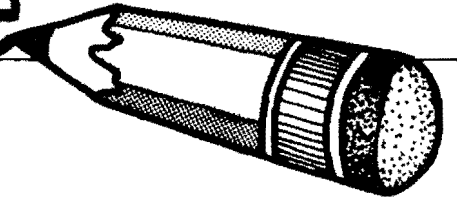
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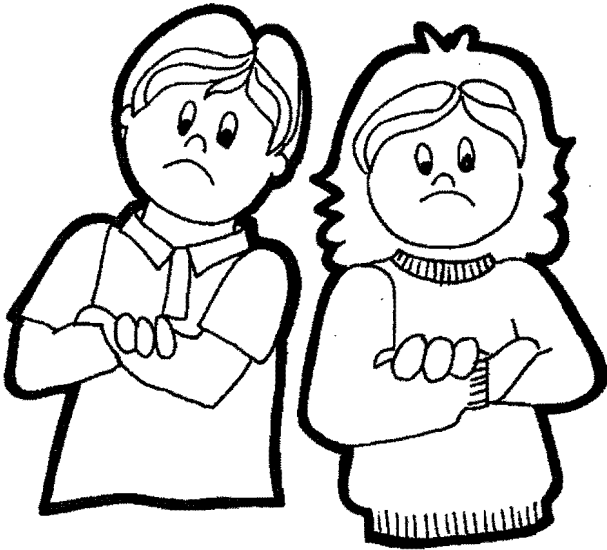
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Parenting Pipeline



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Sibling Rivalry

"Mom! Brian's picking on me!" says Jenny.
"She started it," Brian yells back.

Sound familiar? If so, you've probably experienced several scenes like this and are frustrated with the rivalry that occurs among your children. Sibling rivalry is a normal occurrence in families.

Possible Causes

Jealousy. Children may feel jealous because they must share Mom and Dad with other siblings.

Scarcity. A child may feel on the "short end" of something in the family — affection, praise, recognition or other forms of attention.

Lack of environmental control. A child may feel lack of privacy or lack of control and responsibility.

Ways to Handle Rivalry

Stop children if they are fighting angrily or being physically harmful. Allow time for separation and reinforce the importance of kindness.

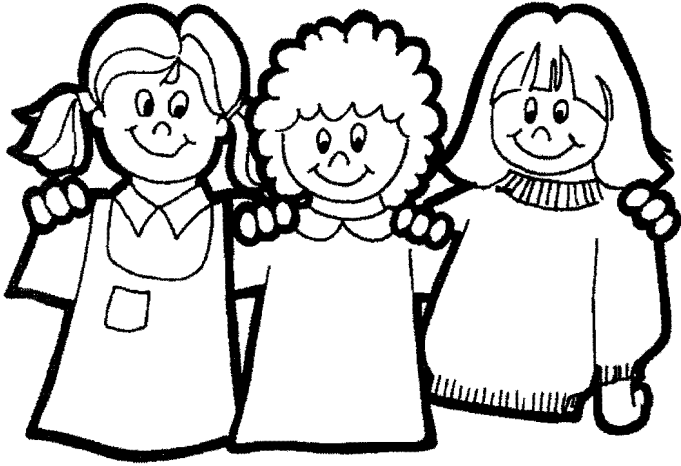
Assist children to resolve conflicts they cannot manage themselves. Encourage children to discuss problems and find a solution together.

Recognize the children when they are being nice to each other, like sharing while playing together. Catch them at being good!

Arrange special time with each child. Giving each child your undivided attention 10 minutes a day for a week can help to overcome feelings of being left out or unimportant.

Private space. If a separate bedroom for each child is impossible, try designating a separate chest of drawers or closet or special space to give each child a sense of control in part of the environment.

Avoid comparing one child to another. Each is an individual and needs to be treated fairly, with no favoritism or labels. Help grandparents, teachers and other adults avoid comparing siblings, too.



The Power of Peers

Friends. Peers. Popularity. To a second-grader, these are becoming increasingly important and will continue to be as the child grows. A child's destiny is influenced in part by the power of peers.

Peer Influences

Relationship skills. With peers, children learn such skills as socializing, compromising, dealing with conflicts and putting feelings into words. Provide opportunities for your child to play with peers and practice these social skills.

Self-image. Earning a place in the group has a real bearing on your child's self-image. The child who succeeds in the world of peers during middle childhood will enter the adolescent years with a more solid sense of self-confidence and self-respect, enabling the child to better handle relationships. It is not the quantity of friends that is important but the quality of the relationship developing with friends.

Reality testing. Playmates force children to face realities of their world. They teach what is acceptable and what's not, and how to live by the rules that are a fact of life. Playmates provide new ways to play, think, talk and get along. Your child will question you and learn about what you value in friendships. This information and the actual experiences he encounters will help your child grow in his relationships.

Functions of Peers

Family Replacement. Peer groups provide a certain status independent of one's family. They also can be a stabilizing influence during this time of growth and change in a child's life.

Belonging. Peers can provide a positive influence on a child's self-esteem. It's a good feeling to be important to someone outside the family unit. Children need group support to gather necessary strength to eventually stand on their own.

Transmit values. Contact with peers exposes children to values different from their parents'. It's important for children to realize that many different standards exist in the world. However, strong family values give a child a good basis for deciding whether to incorporate new and different values into her life.

Experience. Peer groups provide an opportunity to practice by doing, to try out different roles. Participation in extracurricular activities and discussions about life and other topics are important rehearsals for adulthood. Feedback from peers is immediate and can be used to modify and refine one's emerging concept of who I am and what roles I can play. Peer influences need not be threatening. Be involved with your child and his friends. Help to guide them toward a positive experience.

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