



BE PREPARED

# Help kids learn outside the classroom

*Increase chances of school success  
with a few easy at-home techniques*

**W**hether they are just starting school or in their senior year, your kids' first—and most important—teacher will always be you. What's the most valuable lesson Professor Mom can impart? Learning is fun. By encouraging kids' natural curiosity, modeling your own love of learning and making the real world their classroom, you help them nail down the traditional three R's as well as important life skills such as time and money management—all the while giving them confidence in their own abilities. *By Jennifer Garam*

**Did  
you know?**

Children who are read to regularly at home do better in school and have fewer behavioral problems.

Source: U.S. Department of Education

# Take note: **Lessons** for every age

Get students from tots to teens excited to learn.

## When they're in pre-K

➔ **Chalk it up.** Go outside to draw numbers and letters with chalk. The tactile memory of shaping the figures helps etch them into your little one's brain.

**TRY THIS** Your child can use a finger to draw numbers and letters in sand, or even in a tray of uncooked rice, for the same effect.

➔ **Count it out.** Count household items aloud. Your child can practice his 1-2-3's as you're unpacking groceries, walking up stairs or cleaning up toys.

**TRY THIS** Have her string a beaded bracelet while counting each bead aloud.

➔ **Be a model reader.** Show your child that reading is fun. Make quiet time to sit together and each "read."

**TRY THIS** Set her up nearby with picture books while you read the newspaper.

➔ **Puzzle it out.** Puzzles build concentration. Buy a few simple jigsaw puzzles and piece them together, side by side.

**TRY THIS** Encourage your child to finish his puzzle before going to the next activity. It's a lesson he can take straight to school.



## When they're in elementary school

**COOK TOGETHER!**  
Math lessons  
abound during  
meal prep.

➔ **Feed an obsession.** Kids often develop deep passions, which you can use as lenses for learning. Find library books about a favorite topic, plan a field trip to a related museum and watch videos on the subject to spark curiosity about something she loves.

**TRY THIS** Visit [watchknowlearn.org](http://watchknowlearn.org) for free online educational videos, organized by topic and age level.

➔ **Start her saving.** To show your child that money isn't just for buying toys, try using three piggy banks to hold her allowance: one for long-term savings, one for

spending and one for charity. Every few weeks, have a meeting to help her decide what to save for, what to buy and where to give.

**TRY THIS** Teach the value of saving by paying monthly interest on the cash left in the account.

➔ **Get in the kitchen.** Dividing fruit into sections, measuring portions of rice...cooking is all about math. Use this time to show kids how many ounces are in a pint, for example, or how much  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of flour becomes when you double a recipe.

**TRY THIS** Bake a treat and put your child in charge of measurements.

## When they're in middle and high school

➔ **Hold discussions at dinner.** Talk about the books assigned for school. (Read along, if you can.) To spark more lively conversation, ask open-ended questions instead of yes-or-no ones.

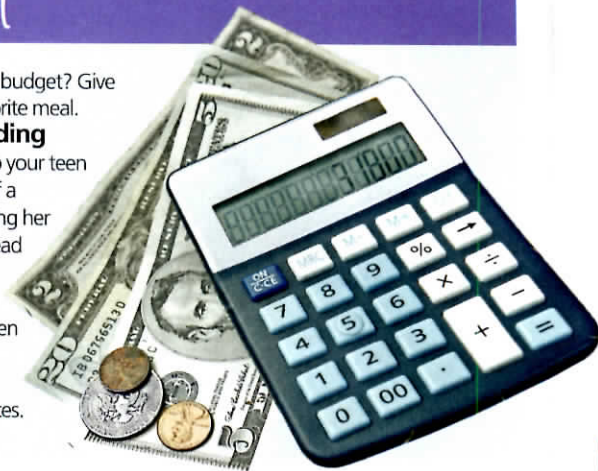
**TRY THIS** Relate your kids' reading to their lives. For example, discuss family history when they're tackling Anne Frank's diary. You're teaching how to make personal connections with literature.

➔ **Help her manage money.** Give her a budget for an upcoming expense (a family vacation, say, or a day trip) and ask her to plan activities for everyone while staying within the set amount.

**TRY THIS** Did she come in under budget? Give a reward such as a movie or favorite meal.

➔ **Encourage a budding entrepreneur.** Help your teen get used to the independence of a part-time or summer job by urging her to inquire at local stores and spread the word to friends and family that she's looking for work.

**TRY THIS** On her first payday, open a savings account. Key Bank, Wells Fargo and other banks offer student accounts and services.





## Log on for learning

Mastering new skills and conquering difficult homework assignments is child's play with free online resources and inexpensive apps.



### ► KHANACADEMY.ORG

Featuring a library of short videos for levels K through 12 that cover math, science, finance and history, this website includes interactive challenges and assessments.

### ► BRIGHTSTORM.COM

Look here for videos that provide homework help in math, science, grammar and writing.

### ► XTRAMATH.ORG

A website that can be used throughout the elementary grades, it gears math problems toward a child's skill level.

### ► YOUTUBE.COM/EDU

This YouTube channel features educational videos on a range of subjects for students at every age.

### ► FUNBRAIN.COM

Find free educational games, online books and comics that develop math and literary skills for kids in preschool through middle school.

### ► IWRITEWORDS

Well worth its \$3 price, this iPhone app uses games to make learning to write letters and numbers fun.

### ► MATH DRILLS LITE

This free iPhone app teaches basic arithmetic: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

### ► ALGEBRA TUTOR

This free Android app helps kids step by step through problems, and shows them where they've erred.



**Stay involved!**

Research shows that parental involvement is a significant indicator of academic success. Get to know your kids' teachers, ask your kids how their day went and keep up with homework and curricula.

## Make the grade as a homework helper

Nurture stellar study habits with these guidelines.

✓ **Create a proper space.** Kids thrive with structure and routine, so have them do their homework at the same spot each day. You can put a desk in their bedroom or even in a kitchen nook. Just make sure it's quiet and well-stocked with school supplies (for ideas, see "Design a Work Space Anyone Can Use," p. 98).

✓ **Set a consistent time.** Look at your family's schedule to see what works best—homework might need to follow after-school activities, but try to schedule it for earlier in the afternoon. Whatever time you choose, avoid making your kids hit the books the second they walk in the door. Just like adults, children need a little break after a long day.

✓ **Go offline.** Forbidding the use of electronic gadgets might be impractical, but at least draw some boundaries so that you limit distractions and underscore the importance of reading. Keep television and computer games off-limits until homework is done. Let time spent in front of the screen serve as a reward if necessary.

✓ **Get organized.** Time management is a skill that will help your kids in school—and for the rest of their lives. Help prioritize their assignments: Shorter tasks (a math worksheet) should generally be knocked off before longer ones (an essay). Checking small things off the list helps motivate kids to keep going and keeps them from losing the entire night to a bigger task.



# TIP:

**Use a timer to keep track of how long assignments take. Your kids will learn to estimate accurately how much time to allot for each task.**

## ALL YOU BACK TO SCHOOL sources

**Isra Albinali**, founder of the *thefrugalette.com*; **Luke Beno**, MD, pediatrician at Kaiser Permanente Cascade Medical Center in Atlanta; **Ari Brown**, MD, pediatrician and spokeswoman for the American Academy of Pediatrics and co-author of *Expecting 411*; **Hernando A. Cardona**, MD, Windermere Pediatrics, Orlando, Fla.; **Pamela Gigi Chawla**, MD, director of medical and surgical services, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota; **Michelle Cooper**, co-owner of Student Organizers of Atlanta; **Corinn Cross**, MD, spokeswoman for the American Academy of Pediatrics; **Andrea Deckard**, author, *savingslifestyle.com*; **Nora Dunn**, co-author of *10,001 Ways to Live Large on a Small Budget* and senior writer at *wisebread.com*; **Steve Ettinger**, certified personal trainer and author of *Wallie Exercises*; **Jenny Feldman**, senior fashion editor, *myhabit.com*; **Sue Gallaher**, founder of *thehomeschoolchick.com* and co-founder of *hiphomeschoolmoms.com*; **Kevin Gallegos**, vice president of Phoenix operations at Freedom Financial Network in San Mateo, Calif.; **Teri Gault**, founder and chief executive of *TheGroceryGame.com* and author of *Shop Smart, Save More*; **Kathryn Glass**, MD, pediatrician at Memorial Hermann Medical Group in Texas; **Michelle Grey**, co-owner of Student Organizers of Atlanta; **David Hill**, MD, author of *Dad to Dad: Parenting Like a Pro*; **Brad Hoffman**, founder and chief executive of *My Learning Springboard*; **Erin Huffstetler**, *about.com* guide to frugal living; **Jessica Issler**, RD, lead educator for Divabetic; **Michelle Jao**, MD, pediatrician at Central DuPage Physician Group in Illinois; **Jenny Kinne**, RD, clinical nutrition specialist at Boston Children's Hospital; **Amy Knapp**, publisher and creator of the *Family Organizer*; **April Lewis-Parks**, money-saving expert at *missmoneybee.com*; **Jessica Matthews**, exercise physiologist, personal trainer and group fitness instructor; **Susan McQuillan**, RD, author of *Sesame Street: B Is for Baking*; **Noelle Micek**, owner of An Organized Nest in San Francisco; **Kate Mehok**, chief executive of Crescent City Schools in New Orleans; **Sally Mounts**, PsyD, president of the Auctus Consulting Group; **Robert Needelman**, MD, pediatrician at the MetroHealth System in Cleveland; **Stephanie Nelson**, founder of *couponmom.com*; **Sharon Palmer**, RD, author of *The Plant-Powered Diet*; **Kathy Peel**, author of *The Busy Mom's Guide to a Happy, Organized Home*; **Jeff Potter**, author of *Cooking for Geeks*; **Barbara Reich**, founder of Resourceful Consultants in New York City; **Howard Reinstein**, MD, spokesman for the American Academy of Pediatrics and an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA; **David Scott**, exercise physiologist and coordinator for the Kid-Fit program at Goryeb Children's Hospital in New Jersey; **Jennifer Shu**, MD, pediatrician and author of *Food Fights*; **Sabina Singh**, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics and emergency medicine at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Pennsylvania; **Jackie Warrick**, president and chief savings officer of *CouponCabin.com*; **Liz Weiss**, co-founder of *mealmakeovermoms.com* and co-author of *No Whine with Dinner*

## YOUR ESSENTIAL shopping guide

Looking for more info about products you saw in ALL YOU?  
Use this alphabetical listing as your go-to source

**A** **Arizona by JCP**  
Also available by calling 212-295-6120.

**B** **Built** Also available by calling 212-227-2044.

**C** **Command** Also at Walmart.

**Container Store** Also at *containerstore.com* and available by calling 800-786-7315.

**Crayola** Also at Target and Walmart.

**D** **Design Ideas** Also available by calling 800-426-6394.

**E** **EcoGear** Also available by calling 800-843-2446.

**F** **Five Star** Also at Fred Meyer and *amazon.com*.

**Forever Frogs** Also available by calling 855-253-7647.

**G** **Garnet Hill** Also available by calling 800-260-1926.

**Gerber Graduates** Also at Target.

**H** **Home Depot** Also at *homedepot.com*.

**I** **Ikea** Also at *ikea-usa.com* and available by calling 800-434-4532.

**J** **Jansport** Also at Kohl's.

**J** **World Kids** Also available by calling 800-843-2446.

**K** **Kipling** Also available by calling 866-376-4185.

**L** **Lands' End** Also available by calling 800-963-4816.

**LL.Bean** Also available by calling 800-809-7057.

**Lunch Punch** Also available by calling 800-716-4199.

**M** **Martha Stewart Home Office** Also at *staples.com* and available by

calling 800-782-7537.

**O** **Olympia** Also available by calling 800-843-2446.

**Ore Originals** Also available by calling 800-367-2675.

**P** **PB Teen** Also available by calling 866-472-8336.

**R** **Room Essentials** Also at *target.com*.

**S** **Schoolbags for Kids** Also available by calling 877-573-7833.

**Spoon Sisters** Also available by calling 800-716-4199.

**T** **Target** Also at Target.

**The Children's Place** Also at the Children's Place.

**W** **Walmart** For more information visit *walmart.com* or call 800-925-6278.

### Cheer up your kids' first day back with cute schoolhouse cookies

Grab some ready-to-roll cookie dough and colored icing, then pack up lunch-box treats to make them smile.

Even high-school kids are bound to appreciate these cookies, made to look like school gear. We made a notebook, a ruler, a calculator, a school bus, a lunch box, scissors, a marker and a pencil. We

cut them freehand—no special cookie cutters needed. Use your imagination and create backpacks, erasers and more. Roll out store-bought sugar-cookie dough, or make your favorite recipe, cut it into

shapes, then bake. To make neat edges, spoon some royal icing—dye it with food coloring first—into a ziplock bag, snip off a corner and pipe it along the edge of each cookie. Then fill it in with more icing.

