



Don't let mornings drag you down!

The annoying thing about mornings is that they arrive so early. But, on the bright side, you know they're coming, so you have plenty of time to prepare. And the better prepared you are in the morning, the less likely you'll be to run late, miss the bus or (worst-case scenario) miss school altogether. To keep your mornings hassle-free and your attendance record spotless:

- ✦ **Prep the night before.** Lay out your clothes, plan your lunch and load up your backpack.
- ✦ **Know how you'll get to school.** Don't wait until the morning to make arrangements.
- ✦ **Get enough sleep** (about nine hours). Having a regular bedtime at a reasonable hour will help, too
- ✦ **Don't squeeze in too much.** Just shower, dress, eat and go.



It's a fact: Attendance can boost achievement

People say that eighty percent of success is just showing up. And there's strong evidence that school attendance makes a difference. Research shows that even a *small* improvement in school attendance can result in *big* test-score gains.

Remember, regular attendance can be your key to school success!

THE PARENT INSTITUTE

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Student Tips

Why Your Attendance Matters



You're doing word problems in math class tomorrow. Sounds like the perfect day to suddenly come down with a cold, doesn't it? Not so fast! Learning builds day by day. You can't stay on top of your classwork if you're not there to listen and take notes. In subjects like math and science, where the lessons you learn this week will be the basis for next week's lessons, it is crucial that you attend class every day.

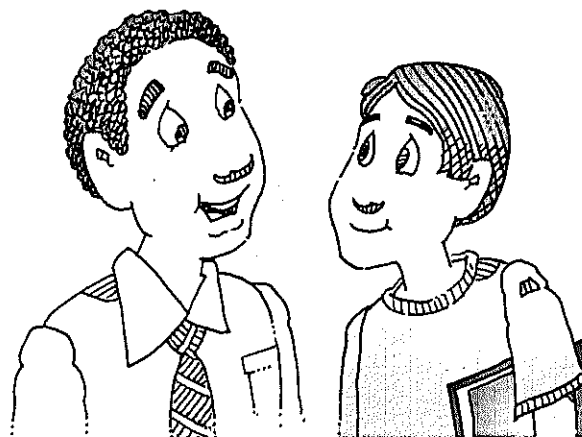
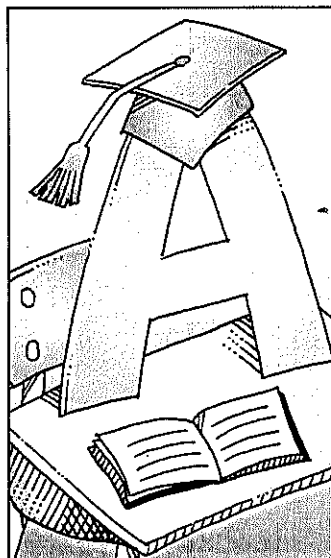
You might be able to think of a dozen things you'd rather be doing than sitting through class. But right now, your number one responsibility is learning. Look inside for more information on why attendance is so important.

Why Your Attendance Matters

Why does attendance matter?

Your teachers—and your school—have rules on the number of days you can be absent. That's because they want you to attend class! Here's why:

- + **You're likely to get better grades.** You can't learn if you aren't in school. Research shows a clear link: students who come to class do better in school.
- + **You're likely to get a better job.** The habits you set now—attending class every day and coming to school on time—will carry over into the workplace.
- + **You're more likely to stay out of trouble.** One study found that 78 percent of those who ended up in prison had a first arrest for school truancy.
- + **You'll be more likely to graduate.** Missing too many classes is often the first step toward dropping out. Students who drop out of high school have a higher rate of unemployment.



Excuses, excuses ...

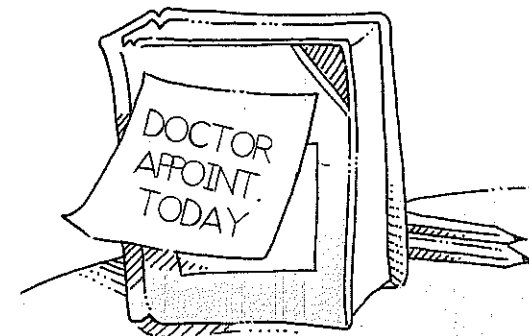
It's tempting to skip school when you haven't studied for a test or when you stayed up too late with friends the night before. But by staying home, you risk falling behind on classwork. Consider why the following are **not** good reasons to stay home:

- + **"Classes are boring."** Not every class can be your favorite. Try to find something about the subject that interests you.
- + **"I don't like my teachers."** It's normal not to get along with everybody—but that's just a part of life. Remember, your teacher is in charge and deserves your respect.
- + **"I don't feel safe at school."** If you have reason to believe you are not safe, talk to a teacher, your counselor or other school officials.
- + **"I feel stupid."** Do you often find you just don't get it? Find a "study buddy" or a friend who can help you after school.
- + **"My job is more important."** Your most important job right now is getting an education.

Sounds good, but ...

Here is a list of things that sound like good reasons to skip school—but they're really not. Discuss them with your parents:

- + **Doctor or dentist appointment.** Schedule it before school, during your lunch period or after school.



- + **Family vacation.** If your family has scheduled a vacation during the school year, talk with your parents. Could it be rescheduled during a school break?
- + **Babysitting for your younger sibling.** Your number one job is being a student, not a child care provider.
- + **Being unprepared for class or a test.** If you didn't study or didn't complete your homework, it's your responsibility to face the consequences. Talk to your teacher. Together, you may be able to think of a way you can make up for it.

So what
are good
reasons to
miss school?

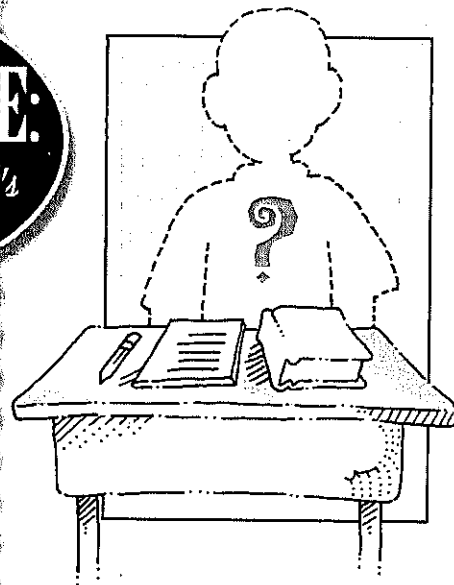
- + A death in your family.
- + A family emergency.
- + When you're truly sick.

If you must miss class, contact your teacher. See if a classmate can bring you the assignments and class notes.

ATTENDANCE:

A Key to Your Student's Success

*Schools are responsible
for teaching your child.
But schools can't do their job
if your child is absent.
Learning builds day by day.
A child who misses a day of
school misses a day of learning.*



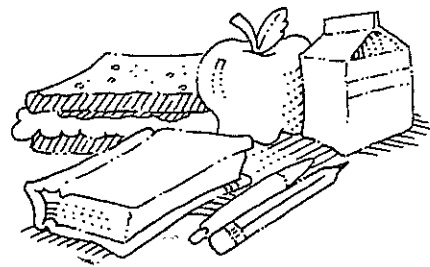
Research shows that children who are in school most of the time do better on standardized tests. Studies also show that kids who are absent more often score lower on standardized tests.

Being late for school hurts a child's learning, too. A student who is 10 minutes late every day will miss 30 hours of instruction during the year.

Children can copy notes or make up an assignment, but they can never get back what's most important: the discussions, the questions, the explanations by the teacher and the thinking that makes learning come alive.

Your child's success in school depends on having a solid educational background—one that can only be gained through regular school attendance.

Here's How You Can Improve Your Child's School Attendance

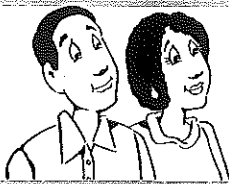


- Talk with your child about why it's important to attend school regularly.
- Avoid scheduling family trips or doctor appointments during school hours.
- Make sure your child stays healthy by eating nutritious food and getting enough sleep and exercise.
- Don't accept excuses for why your child "must" miss or be late for school.
- Discuss with your child what happened at school each day.
- Support school rules and consequences for skipping class and being tardy.
- Show your child why education is important. Give specific examples of how education helps people succeed.
- Lead by example. If children see parents taking off work for no real reason, they may expect to be able to do the same thing.

Research shows that attendance is the single most important factor in school success.

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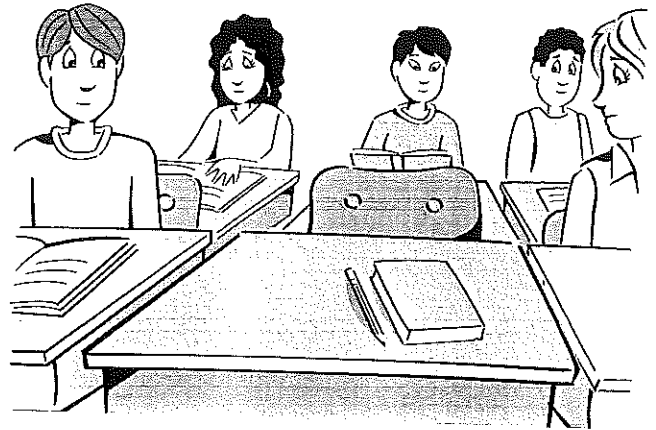
Questions Parents Ask About ...

Attendance



The Learning Advisor Series

THE PARENT
INSIDER



Attendance Matters!

"It's only one day!" Why is attendance all that important?

Studies show that school attendance is linked to school achievement. Learning builds day by day. And if your child is not in school, he* can't learn. It's that simple.

Empty seats in a classroom indicate that students are missing out on learning—and teachers are missing out on teaching those students! When they return, students have to work harder to catch up—and teachers may have to disrupt current lessons to help them. Some students get overwhelmed and give up.

Disregarding school attendance policies in elementary school can lead to problems later on. One research study reports that sixth graders who miss just one day of school a week have a 75 percent chance of never graduating!

So make every effort to get your child to school *on time every day*. Inside this booklet, you'll find guidance and answers to questions many parents ask about attendance.

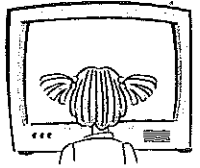
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**Note: Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate the use of "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.*

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My daughter is in kindergarten now, but when she was in preschool, I sometimes let her stay home when she was engrossed in her toys or a TV show. Now she has asked to stay home from school so she can play outside. I wonder if we got into a bad habit in preschool.



Unfortunately, you are right. In kindergarten, you can expect a much stricter attitude about attendance than you may have seen in preschool. Elementary schools expect students to



come to school every day unless they are sick or have a family emergency. Your child's absences will be noted, and you will probably get a call from the school office if you have not sent in an excuse.

Letting your daughter skip preschool when she wasn't sick was not a good habit to start. Your child should go to kindergarten

with the mindset that she has to go to school every day. She can't learn if she's not in school. So starting today:

- » **Tell your child you are excited** about what she's learning.
- » **Tell her she will go to school every day** unless she is sick—really sick, not pretend sick.
- » **Don't interrupt the school day.** Schedule doctor's appointments and vacations during non-school times.
- » **Help your child get enough rest** so she can be fresh for school the next day.

Good habits begin early. And the most important school habit is regular attendance.

My son always has a reason for wanting to stay home—he has a headache, a stomachache, school is boring, etc. How can I make him understand that he can't skip school whenever he feels like it?



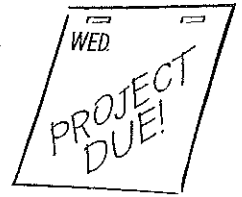
It's normal for your child to want to stay home—sometimes (especially if the bus stop is cold and his blanket is toasty). But don't let him fall into the habit of thinking it's no big deal to miss school. It is a big deal! Kids can't do their best in class if they're not actually *in* class.

To help your child develop good attendance habits:

- » **Talk to him.** Make sure there's no particular reason for wanting to stay home. Is he afraid of a bully? Is he struggling with a tough subject? If there is a reason, you'll need to help him tackle the problem. Start by making an appointment with his teacher. Ask what she has observed.
- » **Set a good example.** Do you often call in sick to work when you're feeling fine? Your child takes his cues about responsibility from you, so make sure you're sending the right message.
- » **Get organized.** Your child shouldn't be scrambling to find his toothbrush, backpack or cereal bowl every morning. Make it easy for him to get out the door by having him organize all the things he'll need the night before. This goes for laying out school clothes, too.
- » **Enforce a bedtime.** Overtired kids are especially tough to rouse in the morning. So be sure your child gets to bed at a reasonable hour every night.



My child has a school project due tomorrow. She says she needs an extra day to complete it. Should I allow her to stay home—"just this once"—so she can get the best grade possible on the project? She's been working really hard on it all weekend.



It is commendable that your daughter is striving for the best grade possible. But if you let her stay home "just this once," you'll be condoning a habit that will be hard to break.

Today's busy students never seem to have enough time. Yet they each start the week with the same number of hours to spend. No one can change that. An important way you *can* help is to teach your child to organize and use that time wisely.

Start by having her write down how she spends her time every day—including time spent watching TV, playing with the dog, talking on the phone, etc. At the end of a week, check the log together.

Is there room for change?

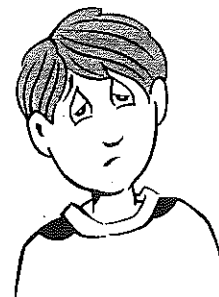
Then help her:

- » **Use a calendar.** Have her write down what's due and when. For big projects, work backwards. Estimate how long each step of the project will take. Set deadlines for each step. Post the calendar in a prominent place. Check it every day.
- » **Use a planner.** Avoid surprises. At the start of every week, have her transfer items from the calendar to a weekly planner.
- » **Make a daily to-do list.** Have her check the planner every day and prioritize homework. Don't forget to schedule break time!



Don't allow your child to miss school. And don't be tempted to do the project for her. Let her turn it in on the due date and learn from getting a less than perfect grade—"just this once."

My child has watery eyes and a runny nose. He is sneezing, sniffing, coughing and complaining of a stomachache. Should I send him to school?



Your child may be suffering the onset of a cold or flu. At the height of cold and flu season, children can get ill from touching anything a sick child has sneezed or coughed on. And the cold or flu virus can spread for up to five days.

Although students have a responsibility to attend school every day, you also have a responsibility to make sure your child doesn't make other students sick. Your school is concerned with the well-being of the entire school. So to determine if you should send your child to school:

- » **Check your school's policy and guidelines.** When is a child considered too sick to go to school? If he has a fever? Just the sniffles? What about vomiting? Or a rash?
- » **Check with your pediatrician** for specific medical advice.

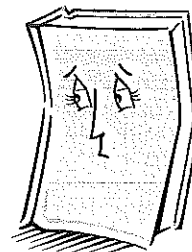


Talk with your child about ways to prevent spreading illnesses. Teach him to:

- » **Wash his hands frequently.** Use a hand sanitizer when washing is not an option.
- » **Cover his nose and mouth** when he coughs.
- » **Avoid sharing items** that might have germs.

Attendance is very important, but you know your child best. If you think your child is feeling so sick that he will not be productive or comfortable in the classroom, it's probably best to keep him at home.

So far, this has not been a good year for my child. She's struggling in school and seems to have lost all motivation. She's also asking to skip school on test days. She says she's going to fail anyway. What can I do?



Although it's not unusual for a student's schoolwork to suffer from time to time, it sounds like your daughter has started to give up. To identify the problem:

Talk with your child to find out what's really going on. Find a quiet moment (bedtime is often a reflective time) and ask what *she* thinks is causing her struggles at school.

Schedule a conference with her teacher. What has the teacher observed? Is your child struggling in a particular subject?



Work with the teacher. Ask about your child's test grades. Is she turning in all her work? Identify specific areas of weakness. Ask how to reinforce at home what she's learning at school. Then:

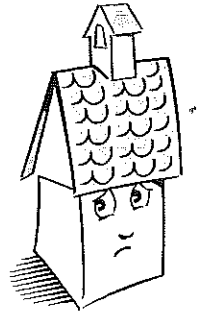
Help her set some achievable goals. Remember to celebrate progress and success along the way.

Monitor her homework. Build structure into her homework routine—same time, same place every day!

Focus on the positive. Don't say things like, "I guess math just isn't your subject. It wasn't mine, either." Instead, praise her effort. "Your hard work is paying off!"

Students who attend class every day are more likely to do well on tests. Insist on daily attendance in all her classes. Hard work and perseverance will lead to an improvement in her grades!

I suspect my child is being teased at school. He has always liked school, but lately, he doesn't want to go. He develops an "ailment" every morning. How can I find out what's really going on—and stop the bullying?



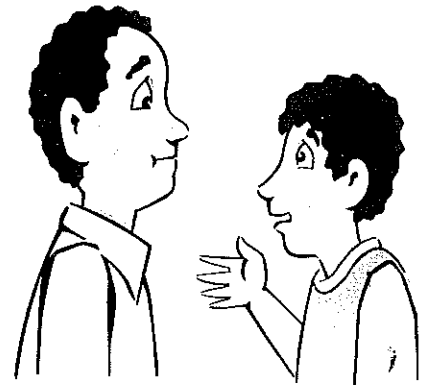
You are right to call the teasing what it is—bullying. Simply put, bullying is harassment. Bullying can be physical—one or more students hurting another. More often, as in your son's case, bullying is verbal and includes persistent teasing, ridicule, gossiping about another person—and even threats.

Parents are often the last to know that their child is being bullied. Most children just don't talk about it. Bullies tend to make their victims feel unpopular and isolated. If your child is reluctant to talk about what is happening, ask him some indirect and general questions. For example, ask your child:

- » "How do you spend your lunch hour?" "What's it like riding the bus home from school?"
- » "Are there kids at school who are mean?" "Are there any kids who get picked on?"

Once he begins talking about the subject in general terms, it may be easier to get him to talk about himself. If you learn that he is being teased, be thoughtful in your reaction. Let him know how sorry you are.

Make sure your son knows *it's not his fault!* The bullies are not picking on him because of something he did. Some kids bully others as a way of showing off or making themselves look tough. Often, they've been victims of bullying themselves and they think intimidation is the best way to handle problems.





Suggest ways to cope with bullying

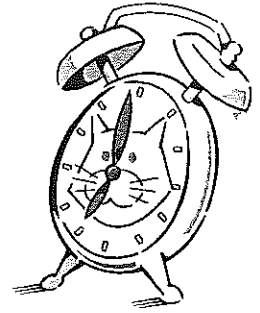
Encourage your child to:

- » **Tell a friend.** It's tougher to pick on a person who has someone there for support.
- » **Walk away.** It's harder to bully someone who won't stand still to listen.
- » **Stay calm.** Bullies seem to target kids who respond to their taunts. Tell him to try hard not to show any emotion. Have him practice by looking in a mirror if he has to. It's no fun to bully someone who doesn't seem to care.
- » **Keep a record.** Help him keep track of what happens—dates, times, places. Write down exactly what the bullies say and do.

If the bullying doesn't stop, it's time to tell another adult. And assure your child he's not being a "tattletale" if he tells his teacher and you tell the school principal. Kids have a right to be safe from attacks. Often a bully has more than one victim—so if he doesn't tell, the bully will keep harassing other kids, too.

When your child won't go to school because he's afraid of bullies, it can have a negative impact on his academic success. Poor attendance leads to lower achievement.

I have a hard time getting my daughter up and out the door on school days. She often misses the bus and, by the time I can drive her to school, she's already tardy. She's just not a morning person. Can you help?



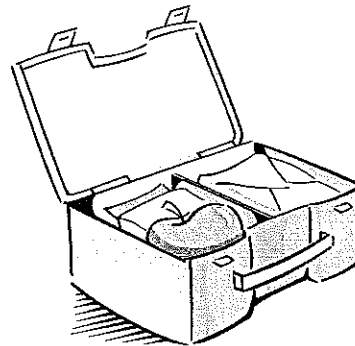
You are right to be concerned. Tardies are just as serious as absences. It is your child's responsibility to arrive at school prepared and on time every day. And missing the bus is no excuse. Missing the first few minutes of class affects not only your daughter, but also disrupts her classmates' learning time.

You *can* take control of morning chaos. The secret is to establish routines—and stick to them! Here's how:

Start the night before

The annoying thing about mornings is that they arrive so early. But look on the bright side: You and your child know they're coming, so you have plenty of time to prepare. Here are some things you can do:

- » **Make bedtime earlier** if your child has trouble getting up in the morning. Children need at least nine or 10 hours of sleep. Decide when she needs to go to bed to get that amount of sleep. Set a time. Announce it. Then enforce it.
- » **Help her lay out tomorrow's school clothes** before bedtime.



- » **Have your daughter help** fill her lunch box or bag at night and leave it in the fridge.
- » **Make sure your child has** packed her backpack with completed homework, signed papers, library books—and everything she'll need for school.

- » **Establish a "launch pad" by the door** where she can place her backpack, musical instrument, soccer cleats or anything else she will need in the morning.
- » **Get your child her own alarm clock.** Give her the responsibility of getting up in the morning in plenty of time to get dressed and ready for school.

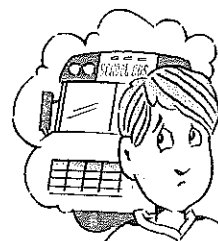
Make mornings successful

Create a morning routine. Follow a regular schedule for everything that your child needs to do—from getting up, eating and making the bed, to walking out the door.

- » **Use a kitchen timer** to help with the countdown. Most kids enjoy playing "beat the clock." Set the timer to ring when it's time to be out of the bathroom, get dressed, sit down for breakfast, when breakfast must be over and when it's time to move on to the next task.
- » **Allow time for a good breakfast.** There will, of course, be those occasional days when nothing seems to go right. Be prepared by keeping nutritious foods on hand that your child can eat in a hurry.
- » **Don't simply say, "Hurry up!"** Instead, state the specific task your child needs to complete next. "Time to brush your teeth." "Time to zip up your jacket."
- » **Don't forget to send your child off on a positive note.** Say, "Have a great day. I love you!"

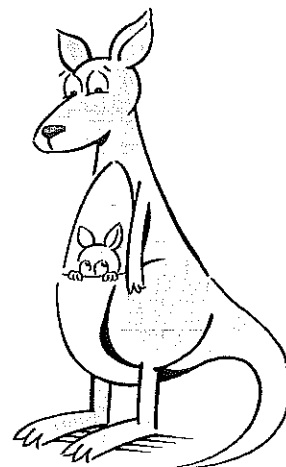


What if my child simply refuses to go to school? He cries and clings to me when it's time to leave the house—and then again when we get to school. Every morning is a battle. What can I do?



School avoidance affects up to five percent of students. It can occur for a number of reasons, including anxiety about:

- Riding the bus.
- Using the school bathroom.
- Reading aloud in class.
- Being disciplined by the teacher.
- Being separated from parents.
- Something terrible happening at home.



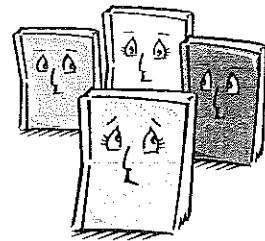
Once you have ruled out a medical condition that could keep your child from attending school, try to determine the specific reason for his anxiety. Your child may even feel a sense of relief to be able to talk about what's troubling him.



Then talk to his teacher or school psychologist about developing a plan to solve the problem. You might start by having another family member bring your child to school.

But be sure to keep him in school. If you "rescue" your child by allowing him to stay home, you will only reinforce his anxiety. (If you decide to keep him home? No TV, fun snacks—or extra attention from you!)

Our family recently moved and our child is attending a new school. She is a good student, but now she hates going to school. She says she has no friends and no one will talk to her. Of course, we can't let her stay home, but how can we help?



The transition from preschool to kindergarten, from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, or starting school in a new neighborhood—these all come with unique anxieties and challenges.

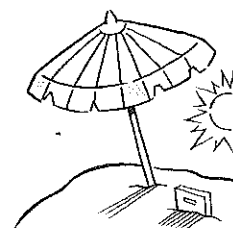
Let your child know you understand it can be lonely to be the new kid. Tell her that even adults feel uncomfortable in new situations. Assure her of your support, and try these ideas to make your child a part of the new school:



- » **Smile.** Tell her to make an effort to be friendly. She might make a game of it. How many people can she say "hi" to each day?
- » **Explain that everyone likes to be asked** about their interests. Help her think of questions she can ask: "Do you play any sports?" "What's your favorite movie?"
- » **Encourage her to join activities.** Does she like to sing? Perhaps she can find a friend in the choir. Does she like to play soccer? Kids can usually find friends on the sports field. Be sure she compliments teammates: "Nice shot!"
- » **Have her invite a classmate home** to play or study together.

Friendships are important to children. If making friends still seems very difficult for your child, talk with her teacher about ways you can work together to help your child.

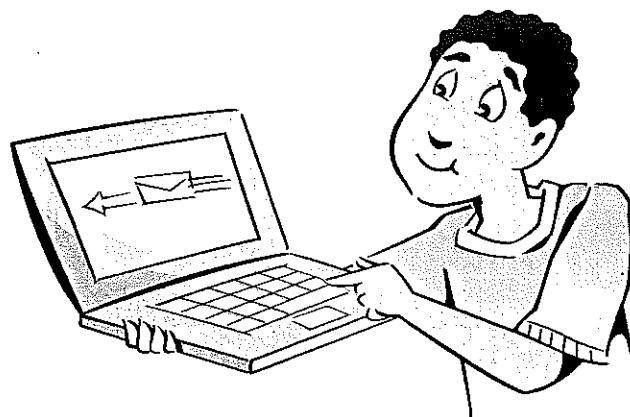
Spring break is approaching, and we've made plans for a much-needed family vacation. We will need to take our child out of school for a few extra days. The teacher has already sent a letter reminding everyone of the school attendance policy. What should we do?



There are legitimate reasons for families to take their children out of school, such as medical emergencies or a death in the family. Most school attendance policies expect parents to schedule family vacations and even medical appointments during non-school times. Far too often, parents want teachers to help their children "get caught up" when they come back from family trips. This imposes an extra burden on your child, the teacher—and classmates.

Remember that many in-class opportunities can't be "made up." For example, a great class discussion or a science experiment can't be recreated. But if a trip is truly unavoidable:

- » **Talk to your child's teachers.** Find out exactly what is acceptable. What are consequences for turning work in late?
- » **See if you can get class work** from the teacher in advance.
- » **Make sure you know exactly** what assignments your child has—and when they're due.
- » **See if your child can submit work** through email.





Remember: Learning builds day by day. A child who misses a day of school also misses a day of learning.

So make school a top priority. By building the habit of daily attendance, you'll help your child see that school is serious. And chances are you'll also see an improvement in grades.

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