

How to help  
your child  
improve  
and  
succeed



version 2.0



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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING YOUR TIME.....	6
TAKING TIME FOR CONVERSATION.....	7
FAMILY READING TIME .....	8
MONITOR TV, COMPUTER AND .....	12
INTERNET TIME.....	12
TIME FOR SHOPPING.....	15
KITCHEN TIME .....	19
SUPPORT YOUR CHILD ACADEMICALLY .....	21
HOW IMPORTANT IS SELF-CONFIDENCE? .....	24
PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE.....	29
PARENTS NEED TO KNOW .....	34



## INTRODUCTION

We have developed this short E-book to provide parents with a variety of practical tips, from our experience as teachers and educators, on things you can do in your home and community environment to help your children improve and succeed.

By success, we mean this in the broader context of your children's lives, encompassing social relationships, school, health and academic performance.

To achieve our aim, we have started by focussing on the concept of TIME.

Our discussion is about the importance of how, as parents, we can use our time effectively, to make really significant differences to many aspects of our children's growth and development throughout their childhood.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

This E-book is about helping you develop practical strategies, actions you can take that will help you achieve your goal of helping your children improve and succeed.

Obviously, it's not enough to simply want one's children to improve and succeed. If some sort of change is wanted or needed, actions have to be implemented to produce the changes hoped for.

So, in this E-book, we have set out ideas designed to help you achieve the improvements you are seeking, to help your child improve and succeed.

If you find the E-book helpful, we have achieved our aim.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING YOUR TIME

In our age of fast-paced living and hectic life-styles, time can sometimes become one of the casualties of daily living. As parents, we can be so busy dealing with the myriad of daily chores that we can easily forget to give our children one of the key things they need in order to really thrive, above many others, more of our time!

The suggestions offered below are based on the idea that by giving your child more of your time, through a range of daily activities, you will also succeed, at the same time as doing far more to help your child improve and succeed in a wide range of life skills.



## **TAKING TIME FOR CONVERSATION**

For example, talking with your child and engaging your child in family conversations is in itself very important.

For young children, conversation is essential in enabling them to pick up the language skills they will need to do well. Young children who aren't encouraged to talk with others can be handicapped as it can lead to problems in learning to read.

In addition, children who rarely take part in conversation, or who haven't learned to listen, can have problems at school as a consequence. These can include not paying attention in class well enough or not following the teacher's directions.

Children who are inattentive in class inevitably miss important information they are being taught. Additionally, children who don't listen to the teacher carefully may also find themselves being reprimanded more often, for example, if the teacher assumes they have ignored an instruction.



## **FAMILY READING TIME**

In your home, try to make reading an important activity that every member of the family is involved in.

That means parents first need to set a positive example.

Children do what we do, not what we tell them to do.

Therefore, the most effective way of encouraging your children to read, is for them to see you reading for pleasure and information.

In our time-poor world, it can be challenging for parents to find time to sit and enjoy reading for pleasure. However, if we hope our children will become competent readers, one of the most important things we can do to help is to ensure we act as positive role models in this regard.

That means, as parents we have to be seen to read as part of our daily lives.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

These days, there are many different ways we can access material to read. The medium you use isn't as important as the fact that you are being an effective role model. Reading blogs or news, etc on the internet, Kindle type devices, magazines or books are all equally valid.

Simply hearing your young child read their school reader, in itself, will not encourage reading as a valuable pastime. Hearing your child read is more about practising the skill of reading.

Try setting aside a block of time each evening for family reading time. Turn off the TV, or even better, prioritise reading before the TV goes on. It might be a sort of family quiet time when all chores and games are put aside for a while.

Many families find that a quiet reading time before children go to sleep can work really well. If you have young children, you can read to and with your children, discussing characters and events. Have fun with it.

The important thing is to take the time to sometimes share with your child what you're reading yourself as well as discussing what



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

your child is reading. Try to encourage conversation with your children at all ages.

For older children, discussing the news and world events is very worthwhile and will help your children to develop a wide general knowledge. Becoming more conscious of the world around them is very valuable for growing children, providing many educational and life benefits.

For example, your children may learn about and become interested in something new, like new technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) or driverless cars. A new interest like one of these might encourage your child to look for interesting, related articles to read on the internet, thereby naturally encouraging more reading.

Such interests might even awaken greater interest generally in science with, potentially, multiple spin-offs. You might, for example, suddenly find that your child is reading up on all sorts of related articles about how computer technology is rapidly changing so much about the way we live. An interest in science could, in the future, lead your child towards career choices very relevant to the 21st Century.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

The point is well made, we hope, that encouraging children to become more aware of the world around them can have any number of potential benefits. As their knowledge of current affairs grows, their ability to start to see themselves in a wide variety of different future career roles also grows.

As a parent, by simply encouraging more reading for pleasure and information, you are not pushing your children in any particular career direction, which might not be beneficial. Rather, the time you are giving them, allows your children to explore potential options for themselves.

Essentially you are doing 3 things:

1. Giving your child more of your TIME.
2. Encouraging your child to READ WIDELY.
3. Engaging your child in MORE CONVERSATION.



## **MONITOR TV, COMPUTER AND INTERNET TIME**

It's easy, sometimes, for parents to fall into the trap of allowing their children to spend far too much time involved in passive entertainment activities such as being glued to the TV for long periods, or playing with computer games, especially when parents are so busy with lots of chores to do.

Relaxation time is as important for children as it is for adults. However, if we are wanting to positively influence our children's progress to help them improve and succeed, permitting long periods of inactive, passive entertainment at home may not be the answer.

Sometimes parents find it beneficial to establish firm rules. For example, during the week, TV might be limited to an hour after school, or no TV at all.

When providing strict limits to television viewing, you are able to have conversations with your children about their choices of



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

programmes to watch. Helping your children to become discriminating viewers is certainly a very beneficial life skill.

Similarly, restricting the use of computer games and internet "surfing" will be equally beneficial.

For older pupils who have homework commitments, parents often find it beneficial to insist that homework is fully completed before relaxation activities are allowed.

Apart from these ideas about generally restricting TV, computer games and internet surfing time, there is also the question of children making choices about the content they access on the internet and the idea of the internet containing many websites that have inappropriate content for children.

While parents can restrict sites accessible to their children, the conversations around these restrictions can have very valuable benefits for children in helping them learn to discriminate what are the most useful and beneficial online activities.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

Within this general area of time for TV, games and the internet, the concept of family reading time fits very easily and logically. In helping your children make choices about all these things, you are building positive attitudes and values that will help promote your overall educational objectives for them.



## TIME FOR SHOPPING

Turning this weekly chore into a learning experience (occasionally) for your children can reap big rewards for them!

Consider these benefits:

1. You can have conversations about making choices:

There are choices to be made about the relative health benefits of the various foods you consider buying.

Left to their own devices, many children might fill a shopping trolley with all manner of junk food. However, when you take the time to discuss ideas of healthy diets and food choices that will benefit healthy lifestyles, suddenly the supermarket becomes a place of learning.

There are choices to be made about the relative costs of different foods. Similar products can cost different amounts. For example, "Own Brands" are usually cheaper. By examining the ingredients of the products closely with your children, you are educating them into becoming discriminating



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

consumers who have an eye for value on the one hand, and health benefits on the other.

There are also choices that are about ethics for you to discuss with your children. For example, should you choose the cheapest eggs knowing the chickens would have been kept in cages and never allowed the freedom to scratch and dig and get some enjoyment of life? Or should you pay a bit more for eggs from chickens that have been humanely treated?

Should you buy locally produced foods wherever possible or is it OK to buy foods that have been transported perhaps thousands of miles? If you do buy food with many "food miles", how does that affect a young person's concerns about climate change?

### 2. You can bring maths into practical application.

At the fruit and vegetables section, foods can be weighed and calculations made about costs. For example, if pears are £1.70 a kilo, how much will your selection cost if it weighs 2.5 kg?



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

You might need a calculator for some calculations and that provides further opportunities for the practical use of decimals and fractions. What decimal number on a calculator, for example, means the same as  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  kg ?

Then moving into other aisles, there are more comparisons of price to be made. One tin of baked beans contains 1 kg and costs so much. Another smaller tin contains 440 gm and costs so much. There are opportunities to discuss concepts of volume (how many g = 1 kg?). There are calculations to be made to find out which size tin offers the better value.

There are also hidden value statements too. Do you pick up the first tin or do you take the time to check the prices of the different brands and compare them for value? Checking prices is more time-consuming clearly, but there's another conversation to be had about the value of the money you're spending. Most people have budgets, and helping your child learn about such matters is an important life skill.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

The weekly trip to the supermarket is undoubtedly a chore for most parents and the idea of taking twice as long with your children to turn the excursion into a learning experience might seem too difficult.

However, as demonstrated above, outside of school, the supermarket is one of those places where there are many, many opportunities for parents, with time available, to continue their child's education. Even if once a month or fortnight is all you can manage, this can be a very beneficial event if you find or make the time.



## KITCHEN TIME

The time spent in the supermarket can easily be extended into the kitchen. The two places can even be linked. With older children, they could have the responsibility to shop for the foods (with your help and supervision) and then make a meal once a week (again with you on standby).

Finding the time to encourage your children's learning in this way will have many benefits. For a start they are using maths and reinforcing concepts of volume and capacity. They may be reading and interpreting recipes. Older children may be experimenting with foods to produce original recipes.

Younger children may be ideal "helpers", measuring out items and learning that 500g is the same as  $\frac{1}{2}$  a kg and what the weight of the 500g feels like.

Time spent with your children in the kitchen will give them more useful life skills around dealing with and preparing foods in addition to the maths they can do in the process.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

Health and healthy lifestyles can also be discussed. For example, you might discuss using separate cutting boards for preparing raw meat or fresh vegetables. Other conversations can be had concerning food choices. For example, what quantity of salmon would be a healthy portion size?



## **SUPPORT YOUR CHILD ACADEMICALLY**

We suggest you take the time to get to know who's who in your child's school. In most schools, children are taught various subjects by different people. By knowing who the relevant people are, you will be in a better position to find help at school if that ever becomes necessary.

At the start of the school year, especially during the primary school years when children usually have an easily-identifiable class teacher, find the time to go and meet the teacher. Let the teacher know that you are a supportive parent who wants to be informed immediately, so you can help, if there are any issues or concerns that crop up and are negatively affecting your children's education.

Find the time to attend school open nights/days.

When your children observe that you are taking an active interest in their education, that will go a long way to ensuring they have a positive attitude to school and their own education. They will be more inclined to generally work harder to achieve greater success.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

If you become concerned that your child is experiencing problems in any area of their school life, make an appointment and go and meet your child's teacher and together work out strategies to improve the situation.

It might be a social issue of bullying in the playground. It might be an academic issue with your child unable to master fractions and becoming distressed about it. If you take the time to meet the teacher, and your child knows you are interested and supportive, that will reinforce your child's positive attitudes concerning the value of school and the education process.

When homework is given, ensure your children know you consider their education is very important and that getting their homework completed well and on time is necessary.

You can demonstrate your support at home for homework by setting up the circumstances to make the process easier. For example, by setting aside a special place, by establishing a regular time and by ensuring distractions are removed such as the TV being switched off, or computer games and phones not being used in the same area.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

By giving some of your time to help your children, helping with ideas, helping them overcome a difficulty or praising a job well done, all contribute to reinforcing the importance of homework and the value you place on their education.



## HOW IMPORTANT IS SELF-CONFIDENCE?

Confident children, who believe that success is possible, even inevitable, are far more likely to achieve success in anything they attempt, at school and later in life.

There are known, very strong connections between how children feel about themselves, and the success they actually achieve. Consequently, one of THE most important things any parent can do for their children is to help them become very self-confident people.

That's why we developed this graphic that demonstrates the link between confidence and success.



Help your children to build their self-confidence and greater success will follow.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

In our work as teachers at Excelr8 Learning tutoring centres, over the years we have witnessed the benefits for pupils who have a lot of self-confidence compared to children who unfortunately have little.

In severe cases, where children lack confidence, they sometimes arrive for lessons with quite negative attitudes towards a subject, usually maths or writing but also with learning in general. Despite our every encouragement, and the best intentions of their parents, it can sometimes be a genuine struggle to help such children build self-confidence.

In extreme cases, children become so determined they can't do things, for example, maths, because failure has become the norm, that they become very resistant to receiving help. Negative attitudes become so entrenched that these children have convinced themselves they can't succeed so they put up their own barriers against further efforts to help them. They won't try.

We often find in such cases that eventually their parents unfortunately give up as well and abandon the tutoring. This of



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

course simply further entrenches failure and the negative attitudes of those children.

One of the goals of this E-book is to try to change such circumstances at home, so that events don't ever get out of hand like that; rather, that parents take more positive steps instead that lead to improvement and success for the child.

**At Excelr8 Learning, we strongly believe that any child can improve and succeed at higher levels when provided with the right encouragement and support.**

Unfortunately, when children experience strong negative self-belief, it can become self-fulfilling. These pupils don't enjoy the subject, believe they can't do it, so they approach all their tasks with a negative mind-set.

That negative mind-set then causes them to give up quickly when they don't immediately understand something, because they "know" (or believe they do), they are no good at the subject. In other words, they expect to find it difficult and as a consequence are more inclined to "give up" quickly on a task.



By contrast, children with a positive self-image and the confidence to "have a go", will often easily overcome similar minor hurdles and move on quickly to the next task and greater success.

In some cases, in our work at Excelr8 Learning tutoring centres, overcoming negative attitudes to a subject becomes one of the most important things we can do for a student. Sometimes it takes a long period of sustained effort on our part, praising and rewarding a pupil for every little success, until gradually over time, the pupil starts to notice that, actually, the topic isn't so bad after all; actually, "I can do this!"

### **Self-confidence is a vital ingredient in success**

In the comments and examples already made in this E-book, we have demonstrated that helping pupils feel good about themselves is a vital element for success at school, and indeed, in all of life. Having the self-belief and confidence to tackle every task with a positive attitude greatly increases the likelihood of success every time.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

**At Excelr8 Learning, we know that helping pupils increase their self-confidence is one of the most valuable things we can do to encourage success in whatever subject or task they are tackling.**



## **PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE**

Firstly, show your children, through your words and actions, that you have a very positive attitude towards education.

As already mentioned, children do what we do, not what we say. Consequently, children will form a positive attitude towards the importance of education when their parents demonstrate a positive attitude.

By showing your children that you value education, you are acting as a powerful role model and this will undoubtedly contribute to your children achieving greater success at school.

We have already covered many ways that parents can support their children in the daily routines of life, in this E-book, by suggesting you take steps to support your children's education at home.

We discussed the example, at the supermarket when parents give their children the time to help them improve their maths. For



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

example, by carrying out practical maths activities at the fruit and vegetable counters or food aisles.

The clear and strong messages this provides your children are that education is important; that success is important and effort is needed to achieve that success; that continually improving skills is extremely important for the future.

You are being that powerful role model and proving that actions speak louder than words. You are reinforcing the attitude that education is important. You are demonstrating to your child that you would like them, or even expect them, to do as well as they possibly can at school.

**However, helping to build your child's confidence doesn't begin and end with school related subjects.**

To help your children become confident people, it's important to be as positive as you can be with them as often as possible, in everything they are doing. This extends to any activity in which they may be engaging, be it helping around the home, sporting activities, clubs, school and social events.



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

Try to facilitate situations that allow your children to shine and be successful.

We discussed already how the kitchen can be a useful place for improving maths skills. It can also be an excellent place for building life skills and self-confidence.

When you take the time to help your child create a dish or some food or a meal and then reward them with genuine praise for their efforts and success, that will provide the encouragement for them to try again on another day.

Therefore, when they have their next attempt in the kitchen, with the success they felt last time and the praise they experienced, they will approach their further attempt with a positive frame of mind.

They will have formed the expectation that whatever they decide to make, it will be a success. The idea is that you try to ensure they experience success by actively providing any guidance or



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

advice needed. This same approach should ideally be extended to any activity your child is engaged in.

For example, in the home your child may be working on a jigsaw puzzle but is becoming frustrated with getting "stuck". By reframing the situation for the child and discussing how much has already been completed and how part of the challenge of such puzzles is taking the time to work out solutions, you can help the child see that rather than failing, he/she is part way towards a successful conclusion.

By trying to help the child avoid giving up, you are encouraging a more positive attitude.

By adopting a similar approach to all situations, it becomes second nature for parents to praise, rather than criticise or support a negative approach.

These are the sort of conditions that will most help children develop a strong self-image and build their self-confidence. When the child's world is a supportive place, where there is lots of encouragement and positive attitudes are displayed towards any



## *How to help your child to improve and succeed*

unusual or everyday tasks, the child is experiencing the fundamental conditions that will lead to greater success.

**The time we give our children, and the support and encouragement we provide, are amongst the most important things we can do for our children that will have a direct and positive effect on their school work, their educational prospects generally, and later throughout their lives.**



## **PARENTS NEED TO KNOW**

In this chapter we provide information that parents need to know. We provide updates every 1-2 weeks, so please check back regularly.

Please click this link to access a menu.

**[PARENTS NEED TO KNOW - LINK](#)**

You will find a range of useful information such as the Top and Bottom ranked schools in the Cambridge area based on SATs results; links to family “Days out with Kids”; links to free sample SATs tests; term dates and holiday dates for Cambridgeshire schools.

Also included: the new GCSE grading system is explained (gone are the old A\*- G grades, replaced with numbers 9 - 1); there’s a comparison table of Key Stages and school years for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and more.

Check back regularly and stay up-to-date.

