

Helping Boys & Girls Learn

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Parenting for Success in Elementary School

Surviving the Winter

For many parts of the country, winter is a time of cold weather when kids don't get lots of outdoor time. Adults can get "cabin fever" during this time of year, so parents want to think of creative ways to keep children active both indoors and out.

Research tells us that the brain learns best when the body is moving! Here's some suggestions to keep your child's body and brain both active and learning:

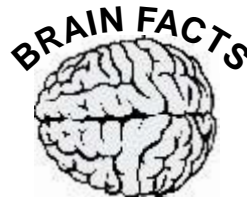
Indoor Scavenger Hunt: Develop a list of things your kids can find around the house, but describe them in ways that may be unfamiliar to them, for instance: "find something that can really put a charge into you day" and see if they locate a battery. Create as much movement as possible in the hunt--if you have a basement or attic, include those areas. Plan a special prize when they find everything--like a healthy snack.

Use commercial movement games (like **Twister**) on a regular basis when it's too cold to be outside for long. Ten or fifteen minutes of active play indoors can help young children stay fit and keep their energy from becoming bottled up and boiling over!

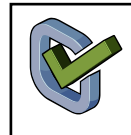
Many malls have play areas that provide a great active escape during winter months.



Remember too: getting outside is important even in cold weather, so make sure your child is bundled up well and get out in the snow. Again, short period of active play outdoors help keep both brain and body healthy.



Music is a "whole brain" stimulant, engaging both sides of the brain. If you play calm music in the mornings while your child is getting ready for school and eating breakfast, you may well help your child's brain be more ready for learning--and the calming music will help keep stress levels down for both of you!



Check This Out

Resources for Parents

Kid Favorites Made Healthy (Better Homes and Gardens): 150 Delicious Recipes Kids Can't Resist (Better Homes & Gardens Cooking)

This book provides kid-friendly, healthy recipes that taste great and are fun to make in addition to practical tips and advice from a panel of experts that help parents talk to their kids about healthful living.

The Sneaky Chef: Simple Strategies for Hiding Healthy Foods in Kids' Favorite Meals by Missy Chase Lapin.

This book is truly amazing. If you have children who won't eat a mini-carrot, they will down veggie after veggie without suspecting a thing!! And you can help them learn in the process.

Parents Need to Know...

Helping Your Child Be Healthy

Obesity means having too much body fat. It is different from being overweight, which means weighing too much. Both terms mean that a person's weight is greater than what is considered healthy for his or her height.

Children grow at different rates, so it isn't always easy to know when a child is obese or overweight. Ask your doctor to measure your child's height and weight to determine if he or she is in a healthy range.

Begin healthy eating early and involve the whole family in healthy habits so your child doesn't feel singled out. You can encourage healthy eating by serving more fruits and vegetables and buying fewer sodas and high-calorie, high-fat snack foods. Physical activity can also help your child overcome obesity or being overweight. **Kids need about 60 minutes each day.**



Elementary-age girls who are overweight may be at-risk for early onset of puberty, bringing increased levels of estrogen and the potential for more volatile mood swings and more aggressive behavior. When the body begins changing due to puberty the brain also begins to change. Girls as young as third and fourth grade show signs of early puberty today.

Parents can help their young girls maintain a healthy weight in many ways.

Offer lots of vegetables and fresh fruits.



Minimize snacks that are loaded with fat and calories and little nutrition – like chips, candy, and soft drinks.

Set a good example--children learn more from what they see than what they are told so practice more than you preach.

Pay attention to what your school offers for lunch and snacks, and work with your school to encourage healthy choices. Children will make good choices when they are offered, especially if they develop healthy habits at home!

While maintaining a healthy weight is important for both boys and girls, girls tend to be at higher risk than boys. Nearly a third of ten year-old girls (30 per cent) and a fifth of ten year-old boys (21 per cent) had a body mass index (BMI) of more than 25 in 2002, compared with 14 per cent of girls and eight per cent of boys in 1982.

A healthy BMI for ten year-olds would be lower! For help, ask your child's pediatrician, your school nurse or your local health department for information.



A-B-Cs

Boys generally develop language skills later than girls, so help your boy by including lots of words in his world. Talk to him, read to him, listen to him, play word games--and by all means possible make words fun!

Family Reading Time

Winter months are a great time to start a tradition of family reading time (if you haven't already done so). It gets dark earlier, kids aren't spending as much time outside – so take advantage of that extra time and do a family read. One model of family reading time is to choose a book the family reads together. Depending on the difficulty level, parents might read and kids listen. A second way to do family reading time is for each person to select a book and the family gathers for reading time but each person reads separately. Pick a time and be consistent – and if you choose the model where each person is reading a different book, spend the last ten minutes or so as a time to for each person to share something exciting or interesting about the book being read. It's very important that parents participate in family reading time – modeling that reading is fun and a good way to spend leisure time. A family field trip to the library on a weekend day can become a part of the activity.



While girls tend to develop advanced language skills early, their spatial skills may be on a slower track. Including lots of spatial play in their play activities like those listed will be fun and promote early learning of math concepts and skills needed in kindergarten and elementary school.

1-2-3s

¡Un Juego de las Afueras, Adentro Durante el Frío!

Use the winter days to let your daughter play some games she may not be as familiar with – like marbles! Marbles offers a great chance to engage spatial processing. It's full of angles and speeds and timing. Use a piece of yarn and some marbles and let her have fun. This website (http://www.ehow.com/how_3999_play-marbles.html) will provide the rules for playing marbles. Print out the rules and let your daughter read through them. Then play the game with her. Not only will this be a fun game that will give her practice in spatial skills, it's a game she can take outside when the weather is nice and still enjoy!

Let your daughter ask extended family (grandparents, aunts and uncles) if they played marbles as children. She'll enjoy hearing their stories and it will make playing marbles even more fun.



Family Fun This Month

January is National Hobby Month

What is a hobby - an activity or interest pursued outside of one's regular occupation and engaged in primarily for pleasure. Developing positive leisure time activities early in life can help both boys and girls make good choices of how to spend their time as they get older.

Sports is often identified as a hobby – and sometimes the pleasure of the hobby is diminished when parents take their child's participation too seriously. When winning becomes the goal at too early an age, the enjoyment of the sport, the chance to enjoy the sport as a hobby, can get lost. If your child wants to play a sport, encourage participation and good sportsmanship. Not only will this keep it pleasurable, but will encourage activity which is healthy for all kids.

While boys tend to participate in sports in greater numbers than girls, all children can benefit from the physical activity that sports provide. While boys will by nature be more competitive and girls will be more interested in how team members are feeling, this is the perfect age to instill good interpersonal skills.

If your community has a youth sports program that is focused on participation and not competition at the elementary level, encourage your child to become involved. This can provide a good option during the winter months when time outdoors can be limited by weather.



Of course, there are lots of other hobbies that are fun and interesting. Explore hobbies that may tie in with activities that your child is interested in already. Upper elementary students are often offered the opportunity to begin playing a musical instrument – a hobby that can be carried into middle and high school and can even help students with talent obtain college scholarships.

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The Lightning Thief

by Rick Riordan

Percy, expelled from six schools for being unable to control his temper, learns the truth from his mother that his father is literally a Greek god. Percy is sent to Camp Half blood where he is befriended by a satyr and begins a journey to retrieve Zeus' lightning bolt.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret

by Brian Selznik

Hugo Cabret, a clever mechanically-minded orphan living in Paris in the 1930's, has fascinating secrets and amazing adventures in the train station where he lives. Sequences of text and drawings combine to tell this suspenseful tale.

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money

by Christopher Paul Curtis

In this first book of a new series, Flint Future Detective Club members Steven Carter, his friend Russell, and Russell's dog (Zoopy) solve the mystery of a quadrilliondollar bill with the image of James Brown on it.



Matilda

by Roald Dahl

Matilda applies her mental powers to rid the school of the evil headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, and restore Miss Honey, her nice teacher, to financial security.

Playing to Win: The Story of Althea Gibson

by Karen Deans

Growing up in Harlem, Althea Gibson overcame odds to become the first African American woman to be ranked as the number one tennis player in the world.

Because of Winn-Dixie

by Kate DiCamillo

India Opal Buloni, age 10, describes her first summer in Naomi, Florida, and all the good things that happen to her because of her big ugly dog, Winn-Dixie.

Julia Morgan Built a Castle

by Celeste Mannis

Following her dream to build buildings, Julia Morgan overcame great obstacles to become the first woman licensed architect in California and the builder of the magnificent Hearst Castle.

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