



10 Tips for Helping Kids Get Good Grades



EXCELLENCE
IN ORTHODONTICS

Every time a child brings home their report card parents are both excited to open it and take a look and they are a bit afraid. If they open that document and see all good grades, they can breathe a sigh of relief, but if they see grades that are not so great or significantly need improving, the sigh will be for a whole other reason. Most parents find it important for kids to get good grades, but they may not always know what it takes to help them pull it off.

Kids getting good grades at any age ultimately comes down to them, and there's no surefire way to help them excel in their academic performances. However, there are a lot of things that parents can try to do to create an atmosphere that will encourage great grades and increase the chances that kids will obtain them. Most kids want to get good grades, too. Some may know exactly why they are falling behind, while others may feel like they are on a hamster wheel, trying hard only to find out each reporting period that they are not really going anywhere.

The Factors

When it comes to all of the things that can go into affecting a child's grades, the list is seemingly endless. It can range from them being stubborn and not wanting to do the work, to them not eating a healthy diet or that they are going through a divorce or family situation. While there are many things that it can be, there are some factors that scientists have found play an important role in whether or not kids of any age will do well in their studies. It's largely those areas that parents may want to focus on to see if making some changes in those areas will bring about some positive changes.

Here are 10 research-based tips for helping kids get good grades:

1. **Attendance.** Research has shown that one in every 10 kindergartners and first-graders are chronically absent from school, missing nearly a month throughout the year. Missing school can have a negative impact on a child's grades, because they miss information and may fall behind. Chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools has become so problematic that the White House recently launched an initiative called "Every Student, Every Day," to try and get parents to ensure their kids attend school each day. They define a student as being chronically absent if they miss 18 days of school or more per year. Making sure kids get to school each day is one way to help boost their grades.
2. **Recess.** A generation ago, kids in elementary school got recess every day, and regular physical education was the norm. Today, there are elementary schools that are doing away with recess, or severely limiting it, and giving passes to kids who don't want to take physical education. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are academic benefits to making sure your child is getting school-based physical activity. Their overall findings evaluating numerous studies on the issue found that physical activity interventions may offer one approach to improving academic behaviors in some youth. If your school has limited physical activity time and you have a child who would benefit from it, work with the school to try and get it implemented. There are national and local groups working to get mandatory recess and finding success in their fight. Many people are beginning to realize the important role that daily recess and physical education plays in the role of our nation's youth, as well as the impact that it has on their academic performance.
3. **Sleep.** Parents often don't get enough sleep, and their kids happen to do the same. Yet research out of the University of Michigan reports that students who sleep more get better grades. Getting enough sleep is vital to kids of all ages, with teens needing 8-10 hours per night. Parents can encourage good sleep habits by helping kids stick to a bedtime, discouraging caffeine in the later part of the day, and ensuring that their cellphone and electronic devices are turned off at bedtime. Well-rested students are better able to engage in their school work, focus better, and tend to get better grades.



- 4. Preparation.** Being prepared for school and learning is essential to academic success. Parents can make sure that students have the things they need in order to be successful with their grades. These items may range from having notebooks and paper to obtaining a tutor for them for a subject they are having difficulty grasping. Having the right tools to do the job is going to help them get off to a better start and is part of parents creating an ideal learning environment for their kids. Whether they need help learning effective ways to study or become organized, or they need materials for a big science project, helping them obtain what they need is important.
- 5. Involvement.** When parents get involved in their child's education, they tend to do better academically. According to a study in the Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, parent involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. They report that there is a statistically significant association between parent involvement and a child's academic performance, over and above the impact of the child's intelligence. While they are not sure why it happens, they do know that when parents are more involved the kids tend to do better. If parents are already involved, then they may want to focus more on other options for helping to raise grades, but if they are not involved then it is a good time to consider ways to do more. Whether it's volunteering in the classroom, discussing school work each day, or becoming an active member of the PTA at the school, there are ways to show your child that you are actively involved.

- 6. Technology.** We live in a technology-driven world. Many of today's youth have never lived in a time when computers, cellphones, and video games were not the norm. They play a big role in many of their lives. While the research shows that children who play video games tend to do academically better in science, math, and reading, there are negatives that come from things like texting. Researchers have found that students who turned their devices off at bed time did better academically, compared to those who leave them on. This is because the ones who leave them on often receive text messages or social media notifications and then they feel the need to check them and possibly reply. This cuts into their sleep time, which makes them more tired at school, and then they tend to not do as well academically. The best route for parents to take when it comes to cellphones and other electronics is to require that kids shut them off at bedtime.
- 7. Bullying.** Unfortunately, bullying has become all too common in schools around the country. Along with taking place during the school day, it even follows kids home with them being cyberbullied online or through texting. Not only does this lead them to have a poor self-image, but according to the American Psychological Association, it may also contribute to lower test scores. They believe this may be due to the fact that bullied students often become less engaged in learning due to fears about bullying. Parents can help tackle this issue by finding out if their child is bullied (often times kids don't tell their parents they are being bullied) and then taking measures to help stop it.



8. **Self-image.** How a child views themselves plays a big role in how successful they will be academically. Kids who feel good about themselves, including the way they look and with their abilities, will likely do better academically. In the September 2016 issues of the journal *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, researchers reported that academic self-efficacy was the most robust predictor of academic achievement. In other words, how they feel about themselves and their abilities is paramount. If they feel good and believe they can achieve their goals and get good grades, then they are far more likely to do so. To help in this area, parents can help their kids to have a healthy self-image and do things to ensure they are confident.
9. **Retention.** Kids who may be struggling with grades may have teachers who are recommending that they be held back. This is a tough decision for parents to make, as they want their child to do better, but they are not sure if holding them back is the right route to take. Those looking for the right answer may want to consider the research, which shows that holding a child back a grade is ultimately harmful, as reported in the journal *Social Forces*. A sociologist from Notre Dame reported evidence that holding kids back a grade is harmful and has scarring effects, even for those in grades as low as kindergarten. Therefore, if a parent has a child getting low grades and retention is being considered as a way to boost them, they may want to think again, because it's not likely to raise grades and may do more harm in the long run.
10. **Books.** Take a quick look around the home to see if you have books. Yes, books, as they play an important role in a child's academic performance. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of having books in the home and how it relates to children's academic achievement. One study has found that parents who have books in the home increase the level of education their children will attain, while another has found that exposure to books and high culture provides important academic advantages. Even if parents are not readers themselves (although being a reader would also set a good example for their kids to be one as well), they can still help their kids get the academic benefits by bringing some books into the home, as well as visiting places like museums and art festivals.





Keeping Tabs

Peers can also play a role in whether or not students do well academically, as do things like them becoming involved in drugs and alcohol. Parents need to take it upon themselves to determine what factors are playing a role in their child's academic life and make the necessary adjustments to help them succeed. Creating a healthy learning environment is a great start, as is keeping tabs on some of these other areas that may affect each person's child differently. This will go a long way toward helping them to do better academically, as well as in other areas of life. Parents will be teaching them life-long skills about the importance of education.

If your child has been getting grades that need to be improved, focus more on positive parenting, rather than taking a negative route. Being negative about their grades may work against you in getting them to raise them, because it could damage their self-image. Taking a positive route to helping them raise their grades will show them they can do it, and help them feel good about themselves. Also, keep the lines of communication open with them. It's a good idea to take a few minutes with each report card to discuss the grades with them. Ask them why they think they got the grades that they did, if they need improving, and ask them what they think could be done to improve the grades. They may be able to help pinpoint an issue that can easily be addressed. Open communication with teachers is also important. Parents can always touch base with their child's teachers to see if they have feedback about what is going on that may be contributing to their child's lower grades. Perhaps they can offer insight that will help, such as that they are tardy, their papers are being turned in late, or they are not taking their time to do the work correctly, even though they may know the materials just fine.

Kids bring their report card home typically four times per year. Each one is a chance to give praise and / or offer ways to help make improvements. Many parents offer incentives to kids to help get them interested in trying to apply themselves more, such as giving them so much money per A or B grade. No matter which route you take, as long as you show some interest in their grades and provide support in helping to find ways to boost them, there is a good chance you will see some improvement. Most kids want good grades just as much as their parents want them to have them. Many are just not sure what to do to get there, which is where parents can come in to help make it happen.

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