

Parent Power Grades 4-5

A Major Ingredient in the Recipe for Education Success

Here are some reading, writing, math and social studies home-learning recipes. Parents of fourth and fifth graders will find them to be easy and enjoyable ways to work with the school—using materials they have at home to build their children’s skills. Many of the activities focus on talk—sharing ideas and feelings, providing information and responding to the needs of youngsters to grow as separate and responsible individuals. Remember to keep the talk flowing. It’s the stuff of high test scores and the basis for parent-child closeness.

Reading Activities

A Lifetime of Reading. Encourage lifelong reading. Read with youngsters by taking roles in stories and acting out dramatic poems. Whenever possible, tape record these sessions. Then listen to and enjoy these performances together.

Street Smarts. Put reading skills to practical use. Gather bus and subway route maps and schedules to a special place in your area—the zoo, a museum, a football stadium. Let your child plan a trip for friends or family. Figure out the transportation available, the travel time required, the cost and the best time to make the trip.

TV and the World. Connect current events to TV viewing. Post a world map next to the TV set. Watch the TV news with your children and have them locate world news spots. Keep reference books such as dictionaries and the world almanac close by. In this way, children can find answers to questions they might have about words or foreign countries.

Writing Activities

Day-by-Day Calendar. Turn a large calendar—commercial or home-made—into a personalized family communication center. Have children fill in the blanks with morning messages, weather reports, birthdays, special activities or notes to the family.

Writing Instead of Talking. Exchange notes at different times during the day—when getting up in the morning, at dinner, or at bedtime or whenever the noise level becomes too high.

Picture Stories. Develop imagination and creativity. Have children select four or five pictures from magazines and newspapers, and put them together to tell a story. Ask children to number the pictures—1, 2, 3, etc. First, ask them to tell the story with the pictures in numerical order. Then, ask them to write it down on paper. For variety, have children rearrange the pictures and tell a new story using this different arrangement.

Math Activities

A Trip to the Supermarket. Plan ahead with the three R’s. Ask your child to choose a dish to prepare for a meal—a pudding, a salad, a sandwich. Have your child check to see what supplies are on hand and then make a written shopping list. At the supermarket, let the child select the food on the list. First, the child decides which items are the best buys on the shelves and then makes selections. Also have the child write the price of each item on the list and figure the total, checking the prices against the sales slip.

On the Move. Sharpen math skills on trips. Use even short trips around town for learning experiences. For example, at the gas station, ask your child how much gas you needed and the cost per gallon. On the highway, ask children to read the signs and check the different speed limits. Then ask them to watch the speedometer readings and notice how fast or slow the car is going. Have children estimate distances between cities and check the estimates on a road map.

Newspaper Math. Introduce new topics for dinner table conversation. Ask your child to pretend to be an investor and choose a stock from the stock market pages of the daily newspaper. Have your child keep a record of the stock’s progress for a week or two and then figure profit or loss. Discuss baseball and football scores and averages on the sports pages. Who are the high scorers? What are the percentages?

Social Studies Activities

History Time Line. Record history at home. Stretch a roll of shelf paper along the floor. Use a ruler to make a horizontal line about three feet long. (Use a separate sheet for each child.) Ask children to fill in the important dates in their own lives, starting with their date of birth. Those familiar with U.S. history can fill in the significant dates since the founding of our country. Display these finished time lines in a prominent place for all to see.

The Foreign Touch. Travel abroad at home. Visit ethnic shops, food stores and restaurants in your community. Give your children time to browse, eat a snack or dessert and perhaps buy a trinket. Before the trip, discuss different ethnic customs and have children find the country on a map. After the trip, let the children talk about what they have seen.

A Closer Look. Look more closely at the family division of labor. Help your children become aware of family responsibilities by making a chart of family chores, including the name of the person responsible, the days and time required, etc. Discuss ways to change or improve these job assignments.

Educating Our Children,
Engaging Our Parents, Empowering Our Schools

