**The difference you can make**

**Helping children learn – the primary years**

Your child learns every day and every where, at home, at school and in the community.

How you support your child’s learning matters. You have a key role in shaping their values, attitudes and approaches to learning at home and at school.

There are simple things you can do to help your child thrive in their learning

**Aim high — believe in your child’s potential**

When a parent holds high aspirations for their child, they
do better at school. Showing your child you believe in them and their ability is powerful. It builds their confidence and helps them see themselves as someone who can do well.

Research shows there’s a link between what parents believe about their child’s ability to do well and their actual achievements.

Praise your child for trying hard, not just for doing well. Celebrate the little successes.

Talk to your child about their dreams for the future. This is important at any age. Talk to your child often about their hopes or ideas for the future.

**Talk with and listen to your child**

When you spend time talking with your child it helps them
to learn and grow. Talk about what they:

* are learning at school
* enjoy or find difficult.

You can also talk about the times your family has spent together. You can tell stories about your own childhood,
or talk about big ideas. It could be:

* the things you and your family believe in
* your culture
* science and nature
* important issues that are happening in the community
or the country.

This helps your child to understand the world around them and their place in it.

**Ask specific questions to out draw information**

Instead of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions, try open questions that encourage discussion.

* How do you think you went with your maths or reading today?
* What made you laugh today?
* Who was a helper today?
* What was the most interesting thing you did today?

Keep trying, even if the answers are ‘good’ or ‘nothing’.

Find out what your child’s favourite school subjects are.
Talk about what they’re learning. Try to make connections between what they’re learning at school and everyday life. Practice reading or counting when you are shopping.

Explore big ideas together. This is a way to get your child to think critically and be curious about how things work. Children can enjoy learning and putting their thoughts into words.

Ask about friendships and relationships at school. Get to know who their friends are and how they spend their break times.

**Learn about the world together**

Parents, more than anyone, can help their child enjoy learning new things. Children learn by exploring and finding new interests. You can help your child learn about the world when you do every day things like:

* cook
* shop
* garden
* play sport.

**Discover together**

Give your child the opportunity to discover new things and explore new interests. Let them be part of their community and culture.

**Talk about your own learning**

Tell your child what you’re currently learning or what you remember. Talk about what it was like when you were their age. Share the message that learning is important at all ages. Explain how you plan, solve problems and think about the future.

**Go on outings together**

Head out to libraries, museums, free concerts, sporting and cultural events together. Look for child-friendly activities, like after-school programs, holiday activities and free community programs.

**Read together as a family**

When you read to your child from an early age it has a lasting positive effect. Reading together can:

* increase your child’s vocabulary
* create an environment for learning together
* give you things to talk about later.

Have your child read to you. It’s a safe and nurturing way for them to practise and learn.

**Tell your own stories**

Share stories from or about your family. Tell stories that have been passed down for generations. Share the stories that are part of your cultural heritage.

**Read and talk about books and stories with your child**

Ask your child about their favourite character in a book.
Talk about what they think might happen next in the story. Ask what they liked or didn’t like about a story.

**Read and tell stories in the language you use at home**

When you read together it does not have to be in English
to help with learning.

If you speak any other languages at home, use them when you read. This is excellent for your child’s learning.

**Praise your child when they make an effort**

You could try to:

* set small milestones for a reluctant reader
* let your child help choose a book or story.

**Find out how you can support your child**

Ask your child’s teacher or school for advice. Ask about how you can support your child’s reading enjoyment and skills development.

**Create a good homework environment**

There are important things you can do to get
the most out of homework. One is building your child’s confidence. Another is to help them learn on their own.
How you help will change as they get older.

**Create space**

An organised space can help a child learn. You could create
a special space for doing things like homework. It can help
make homework a calm experience. If there’s not room at home, there might be a quiet spot at the local library.

**Be there to help if your child has a question**

If you are helping your child, try to make it a positive time.
Minimise the stress related to homework. You can help build your child’s confidence instead of ‘having the answer’.

**Talk to the school about homework**

Talk to your child’s teacher about homework and find out about your school’s guidelines. It’s good to know what is expected and why.

**Be encouraging**

Praise your child for their effort and for trying hard when they do homework.

**Support good relationships**

Children tend to do better when they get on with their teacher and classmates. Strong friendships mean they tend
to enjoy learning and being at school.

**Be positive about school and respectful of teachers**

Help your child build and maintain a positive relationship
with their teacher.

**Support good relationships with friends and classmates**

Skills that help friendships include cooperation, communication, empathy and emotional control.

Talk about:

* your child’s friends and relationships
* how they respond to any problems they are having
* their ideas for resolving conflict in a positive way.

**Ask for advice from teachers and school staff**

Teachers can give you ideas and help you support your
child’s relationships.

**Find out more**

[Talk to your school or preschool](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/education-and-care-locations/find-school-service) about how you can be more involved

[www.education.sa.gov.au/parentengagement](http://www.education.sa.gov.au/parentengagement) – find out what parent engagement resources are available

[https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/parent-information/ –](https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/parent-information/%20%E2%80%93%20) information on what all Australian students learn as they progress in their learning at school

[www.learningpotential.gov.au](http://www.learningpotential.gov.au) – ideas and activities to support learning from birth to Year 12

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au) - information to help parents and carers make decisions about parenting their children.

**About this information**

This information is adapted from a series made in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The ACT Education and Training Directorate developed the series in partnership with:

* the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
* representatives of ACT independent, and Catholic schools and parent organisations.

The series is Creative Commons. It is based on international research and consultation with teachers and parents.