

# How to Create a Home Environment That Promotes Learning

To children and adults alike, the world is essentially our school. Every place we go is a different classroom and every person we meet is in some way a teacher, whether they intend to be or not. Indeed, our education starts at birth and continues through every phase and stage of our life. To stop learning is to stop living. Some of the most important lessons your child will learn will be those learned at home.

Your home is your child's first classroom. It's also the classroom where your child will spend most of their formative years. And who is the teacher? You guessed it – it's you! You're actually more of a facilitator than a teacher. You determine what your child sees and hears at home. That determines their attitude towards learning in that environment. Does that sound like a lot of responsibility? Small changes you can easily make in the environment itself will simplify your job.

This guide will explore steps you can take as a parent to create both a physical and mental environment to fuel your child's natural desire to learn.

## Children Learn by Being Involved

If there is one overriding rule you should follow to create a home environment that promotes learning, it is this: look for ways to involve your child in your daily life. Through games, conversation, and even household chores, your child learns the most when he is given the opportunity to be a functioning part of the family. Never underestimate what

your child can accomplish. After all, it is hard to be more than 'just a kid' when everyone treats you like 'just a kid'.

### *Talk to Them*

Engage your child in conversation. One way to help children understand their emotions is to allow and encourage them to explain their thoughts and feelings when problems arise. It is important to set aside time to discuss with your child the things that are on their mind. Talk about the events of the day and what the week ahead has in store. By taking time to have a discussion with your child, you are assisting his vocabulary development and making them more expressive. You might just find yourself learning something, too!

### *Encourage Them to Help*

Contrary to popular belief, children don't hate chores. They want to be involved in family life and see the positive effect their contributions have on the rest of the family. Assign your child chores that he or she can accomplish with little or no assistance and can see the value of upon completion. Give them ownership of their chores, and explain how they are helping the family. As the child matures, so should the nature of his responsibilities. You will be surprised to see the commitment they makes to his chores when they realizes that they are contributing to the welfare of those they love.

## Encourage Self-Reliance

Your child can learn the important principle of self-reliance through the simplest of activities throughout the day. Look around at things you do for your child on a routine basis that they could handle for himself. Target activities such as dressing for the day, having breakfast, brushing teeth, or preparing for bath or bedtime. These are all simple tasks, and with a little adjustment in the surroundings, you can enable your child to perform them independently.

### *Brushing Teeth*

Take the task of brushing teeth. Create a bathroom environment that will permit and encourage your child to brush his own teeth. Put his toothbrush, toothpaste and cup in an area where it is easily reached after stepping up on a sturdy stool. Place a mirror behind the water faucets. Then show your child, step by step, the procedure to follow and watch them while they practice. Now you've given them the tools and confidence to accomplish something entirely on their own. To you, it's just brushing teeth. To your child, it is an achievement of far greater proportions.

## Create Opportunities to Deepen Knowledge

What is your child most interested in; dinosaurs, horses, fire trucks? Children are more likely to seek out information about things they already find interesting. Identify those subjects with your child and surround them with opportunities to learn more about them without distraction. Go the library or bookstore and get books about them. Use the internet to find pictures, and then explain the details of the pictures. If fire engines are his passion, take them to the local fire station to see one in person. Horses live both

at farms and riding stables, where your child can have close contact. The Science Center or Natural History Museum has dinosaur skeletons and models your child can visit. By encouraging hands-on experience, you help your child understand how much learning can be.

### *Everything is New*

It is important to remember that your child is just discovering the world for the first time. It is all new and it is all exciting. Provide him with the opportunity to pursue more information about the subjects that interest them and they will discover new passions in the process. You'll notice continuous development in their ability to answer their own questions and find new problems to solve.

## Conclusion

Perhaps you're wondering what independence has to do with learning. In the big picture, showing children how to learn is at least as important as guiding them in what they're learning. By giving your child the gift of independence, you're teaching them to take pride in his daily accomplishments. You've given him a gift he will carry well beyond the immediate future, into school, into a career, and some day into being a parent as well.

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