

Homework Suggestion List for the Upper Elementary

This article has been provided by the Montessori School of Beaverton in Beaverton, OR.

To do as a family:

- Have a family reading time. Everybody reads whatever they want, in the same room. Start small: 15 minutes after dinner. Gradually increase the time.
- Have a read aloud time. One person reads while the others clean up from dinner, or do some other task. For reluctant readers, having a parent read aloud a few chapters of a book often entices them to finish it themselves.
- Cook together. Though it is more efficient and less messy when you do it yourself, time spent in food preparation together is often the best "quality time" there is.
- Rather than assigning your child home chores to do alone, elicit his or her help in projects that you are doing. Housework, folding laundry, raking leaves, washing dishes: all are more enjoyable with company. Your child may resent doing them alone, but delight in doing them with you. Remember the social nature of the child at this age.
- Dictate the shopping list to your child while you check the cabinets and fridge. Then take your child shopping with you. Bring a pocket calculator and let your child keep a running total, or figure how much 3 lbs of chicken will cost. Share with your child why you purchase the brands and foods you do.
- Play board games: Monopoly (find a place where you can leave it set up, and play a little bit each time), Clue, Mastermind, Scrabble, chess, Pictionary, Trivial Pursuit, go, Stratego, Parcheesi, cribbage, hearts...do crossword & jigsaw puzzles.
- Buy a Thompson's Guide (often available at Costco). The students use it at school to figure out routes to the places they're going for off-campus study or to run errands. Ask your child to figure out the best way to get to their friend's house, or to their piano lesson.
- Start a family journal. Literary masterpieces are not expected. Our family journal consists mostly of lists of things to do around the house, what we planted in our garden and little messages from our houseguests. What matters is that your child views writing as both ordinary and valued. See Peter Stillman's book, *Families Writing*, for inspiration.
- Turn off the TV. For a month. Yes, you can.

To do on one's own:

- Listen to books on tape while driving to school, or while doing chores.
- Plan menus for the upcoming week, keeping in mind what we've learned about nutrition and healthy eating. Discuss your plans with your parent.
- Keep a journal of what you eat for a week. Are you in balance with the recommendations of the food pyramid?
- Memorize a poem to share with the class. Use props if you like.
- Choose a story to read aloud to the class. Practice the pronunciation of all the words. How can you use your voice to make the reading more interesting to your audience?
- Practice cursive italic in your book. Play some soothing music and take your time. Concentrate on making the most beautiful letters you can.
- Do your own laundry, or do some laundry, for your family. Sort the clothes by color. Find out what kinds of fabrics go in what temperature. Learn about the

cleaning products your family uses, and how to work your washing machine. Hang or otherwise dry the clothes. Fold them and put them away.

- Make your own lunches, remembering what we have learned about healthy eating.
- Write letters! It's the best way to get mail. Write to grandparents, cousins, friends near and far, elected officials...We have many addresses at school. Or start a round robin letter among family members or among friends.
- Write a letter to a company praising their product or service, or complaining about it. Be polite and specific. Show your self-respect by making the letter your neatest, most correct work.
- Design an experiment using the scientific method you've studied at school. Test your hypothesis. Write up the results to share with your family and the class.
- Read a non-fiction book about something you're interested in.
- Practice your musical instrument. Or learn a new song to sing (from a tape or CD). Teach the song to the class, or treat us to a concert with your instrument.
- Write a review of a book, tape, or movie that you liked (or didn't like). Share it with the class, or include it in a letter to a friend.
- If you have a computer, practice typing. Keep track of your speed and accuracy.
- Comparison-shopping: figuring price per pound, calling various stores, etc.
- Do experiments with a chemistry set, or from books of experiments for kids.
- Read a newspaper article and bring it to class to share and discuss.
- Build a fence, doghouse, garden bed, bike ramp, etc. Learn to use tools.
- Play on a team, or practice a sport or physical skill.
- Enter essay or poetry contest.
- Learn a computer programming language.
- Play with Legos, clay, blocks, or other constructive toys or materials.
- Keep statistics: graph when you go to bed, how often you have friends over, etc.
- Measure the area and volume of things at home.
- Work with miles per hour. How fast, or far, do you walk? Ride your bike? Drive?
- Write a description of a friend, a friend's house, a pet, a favorite place.
- Knit, crochet, spin, weave, sew, quilt, hook rugs, embroider, tie-dye, beadwork.
- Do an art project. Design one to teach the class.
- Take a class at your parks & recreation center or community school. Read how-to books about building or crafts, and try them.
- Paint. Sculpt. Ski. Skate. Swim. Camp (even in your own backyard!)
- Participate in Odyssey of the Mind.
- Visit an aquarium, a museum, an exhibit, the zoo, OMSI, the coast, the mountains, a business, parks, factories, other schools. Go "behind the scenes."
- Survey your family. Interview relatives. Start a family newsletter.
- Help plan the family vacation. Research the landmarks, geography, culture, special attractions of the area where you'll visit. Map out the route you'll take.
- Help with the family budget. Record the family expenditures for a week.