

HEALTHY SCHOOL HABITS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



As a parent, you can play a big role in how well your child does in school.

Students are more likely to get better grades, build social skills and make good choices with parent support and interest. Encouraging healthy school habits builds a strong foundation now and for the future.



What are the signs that my child may need extra help?

There are many reasons why children and adolescents might struggle in school. Talk with your child's teacher and doctor if you notice they have:

- A change in grades or how they do in school
- Lower ability to focus or remember things
- A hard time with reading, writing, spelling or math
- A lot of anxiety or stress related to homework or going to school
- Feelings of loneliness, or complaints about bullying or a lack of friends
- A need for more time to complete assignments or tests than other students
- Behavior issues that keep happening in school

How do I ask for more support from their school?

Children and adolescents who have a hard time in school may benefit from an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. These are legal contracts between you and your child's school that outline extra support like accommodations, changes and interventions.

IEPs and 504 Plans can make sure your child gets the help they need to learn and succeed in school. They can start as early as age 3, even if your child is not yet going to school.

Some examples are:

- Copies of notes
- Extra time on tests
- Excused absences for medical appointments
- Modified (changed or adapted) assignments
- Occupational therapy or speech therapy (services that can help with daily activities and language)
- Small group teaching for reading, writing or math

What are Healthy School Habits?

Academic success starts at home. Children and adolescents can do their best in school when they have these healthy school habits:

Enough sleep. Too little sleep can lead to bad behavior, irritability and poor grades.

Going to school every day. Kids do better in school when they go every day. Make sure your child gets there a few minutes before the bell so they are ready for class to start.

Encouragement from parents, family members and teachers. Let your child know they have a support system they can turn to when they feel overwhelmed or stressed.

Extracurricular activities. Sports, music, hobbies or other enjoyable activities also help your child learn new skills, make friends and lower stress.

Few distractions. Create a quiet zone where they can do their homework and study. Some kids study better with music or fidget toys. Other than those, try to not have anything else that distracts them.

Taking breaks. Kids can focus better when they take short breaks often during study sessions and homework.

Fun learning experiences. Learning information in an engaging way both during and outside of school can support memory. This can be through:

- hands-on learning such as projects or building something
- interactive educational videos
- talking about interesting topics your child or adolescent is learning about in school

Healthy eating habits. Encourage your child to choose “brain food” like fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods.

Homework and study routines. These help your child learn good study habits they can take with them throughout their education, into the workforce and beyond.

Learning strategies. Everyone learns information in their own way. Some kids learn better by watching, others learn better by hearing. Help your child find the study strategies that work best for them.

Regular exercise. Children and adolescents need regular physical activity. Exercise improves mood, sleep, memory and concentration. Check with your child’s doctor about safe exercises.

Time management skills. A daily or weekly planner can help your child stay organized. Younger kids can use visual planners. Help them learn how to prioritize homework assignments and school projects. This is so they know where to start and what parts are most important to finish first.





What are the next steps?

1. Formally ask for an evaluation through the school. This may include testing by the school psychologist to see what type of support your child needs.
2. Your school district may have an application to complete. Check with the school psychologist or principal about what your specific school requires.
3. Once the school prepares a plan, they will ask you to go to a meeting to review what they recommend.
4. Meet with your child's school team every year to update the IEP or 504 Plan.

Where can I find online resources for more support?



[Helping Parents and Families Create Healthy and Supportive School Environments – English](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



[IEPs and 504 Plans: A Guide for Parents – English](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics



[Learning Disabilities & Differences: What Parents Need To Know – English](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics



[Learning Disabilities & Differences: What Parents Need To Know – Spanish](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics