

COLLEGE SMART[®]



PRACTICAL TIPS
for Parents

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STRATEGY

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Talking to Teachers



TOPICS COVERED

1. Talking with teachers builds better learning relationships.
2. Students who talk in class discussions learn better.
3. Talking to teachers develops student's confidence.
4. Asking questions in class? As important as answering them.
5. Talking to teachers can fill learning gaps.
6. Like writing and reading, talking and listening develop the mind.
7. Talking is one of life's most important skills.
8. Talking trades knowledge, shares ideas, solves problems, and expresses emotion. Sounds like what you do at work, right?
9. Using words is how we work with other people in jobs.
10. Your student should know the role of communication in the workplace. How will they learn? You have to explain it to them.

This Strategy highlights the importance of talking with teachers. It's just like talking to managers and bosses in the workplace, isn't it? Think about it.

You want your child to become comfortable and know how to talk to people in authority — without stumbling and bumbling. While you can prod them to take the initiative to do it, you must help them over this very important hump. We'll talk about how.

Know this: Kids don't just suddenly turn into confident and skilled talkers just because they're getting older. Kids learn and work at being good talkers.

Consider what happens in every classroom, regardless of the subject.

- Teachers talk to students, telling them what they should know and learn. Students are expected to listen carefully.
- Teachers ask questions of students. Students answer them. In doing so, the student is talking to the teacher and the rest of the class.
- Teachers open the class to a discussion about a topic to get students more involved. Students respond (talk) to show what they know and introduce new ideas.
- When students get involved in class, they listen better.
- When students start to talk in class, they learn to talk better. They become more comfortable with talking. Classrooms help your student practice talking in front of others and to those in authority. Classrooms mirror workplace activities.
- If your student doesn't talk in the classroom, he/she probably will not talk in college or the workplace, where talking is even more important, but also more intimidating.

True, students take tests to demonstrate their knowledge. But a much greater part of the learning process occurs in the classroom: **the daily talking and listening between teachers and students.**

If talking and listening were not so important, students wouldn't need to go to school. They could simply watch classes on a screen, read text

books, and take tests. Students could learn that way, but definitely not as well as interacting with others and the teacher.

[H3] TALKING TO YOU AND TALKING IN CLASS

- If kids do not communicate well with parents, they probably will not communicate in class.
- If they don't talk in class, they probably won't approach a teacher when they need help.
- When students don't express themselves or take part in a discussion, **they get bored and tune out**. To use a sports comparison, *Are they sitting on the bench or playing in the game?*
- When communication in the classroom drops off, so does interest, followed closely by grades.

10 WAYS TO HELP YOUR KIDS

1. Keep conversations going with your kids — no matter their ages. The earlier you start, the better.

Talk about fun stuff and serious stuff. Talk about your experiences, the news, stories about mutual friends, the neighborhood, food, a new product you bought and why it works so well, and so forth. You're modeling talking for them. Engage them in conversations. The key here is not to ask questions that can be answered in one word, like "fine" or "okay."

Think of conversations as a tennis game. You serve by asking a question. They respond. But then you work hard to keep the volley going by saying, things, like—

- "why?"
- "what do you mean?"
- "give an example"
- "what happened next?"
- "How did he/she react?"
- "Was that hard or easy to do?"

- “*You, know that’s like something that happened to me once*”...Now you’re enlarging the conversation and engaging in storytelling which may prompt even more conversation.

You want to keep them talking (returning the ball). That requires work and listening on your part, but it pays off because you’re teaching you child two big skills:

- to listen
- and to think while they talk

2. Emphasize participating in class.

The best teachers encourage their students to talk in class: answer questions, participate in class discussions, and give presentations. But all that assumes that the students are willing to talk. You cannot blame the teacher for the fact that your student doesn’t actively take part in class. Classes in which students talk and are engaged are interesting, not boring. Non-talkers make classes dull.

If your student says, “*That class is boring,*” you have lots of possible responses:

- “*How much are you involved in the class?*”
- “*Do you take part in discussions?*”
- “*Do you raise your hand to answer questions?*”
- “*Where do you sit in the class? Do you sit at the front of the room or the back? At least center-middle. The back of the room is where the other bored students sit. Their attitudes can be contagious.*”
- “*If you don’t understand something in class, do you go talk to your teacher after class? That’s important because you’ll always be building on earlier knowledge. You’ll need to understand this thing so you can also understand the next thing. Don’t let it get away from you.*”

3. How to help your child talk with a teacher.

If needed, you could call the teacher to say that your student wants to talk privately. That lets the teacher know to expect a conversation. Your student

becomes “signed up” to follow-through on the visit and cannot back out so easily. After one visit, your student has learned the teacher is a human being and not so bad to talk to. Your kid will be more willing to go for help again, if needed.

But remember: you’re not speaking for your child. Don’t do the talking for your child. Avoid being a *helicopter parent*. Your child must learn to do his/her own talking with the teacher. You’re simply saying that *“Alex would like to talk to you. When would be a good time?”*

4. Regularly explain to your kids how important communication skills are in every area of life, especially the workplace.

You can tell stories about what happened at work that illustrate the power of talking.

Casually talk about your own job to show your kids that communication among employees — and between supervisors and employees — makes all the difference:

- Between the success or failure of a project
- Between job satisfaction and job frustration
- Between getting along well and not getting along with others

5. Another point to make: Good talkers are noticed. They —

- Are more productive and creative
- Are happier and more satisfied with their jobs
- Develop into leaders because they make themselves noticed
- Are much more likely to earn advances in pay.

6. If parents compare classrooms to jobs, kids might understand better that school is practice for work.

It involves arriving on-time, completing assignments, meeting deadlines, learning how to do things. Work is a daily learning process.

7. Being able to communicate well with authority figures gets noticed.

Explain that talking to bosses (like teachers) is so important. No matter

how much knowledge employees have, if they can't share that knowledge *comfortably and clearly*, they may as well not even have it.

8. *Continue to make/raise connections between school and life in casual conversations.*

That way you're *illustrating* rather than *preaching*. You're simply telling stories about work or life. Kids will remember stories. Storytelling is a powerful parental tool. Think how Aesop's fables taught people about the truths of life by listening to stories about animals. Your job? Draw the parallel between bosses and teachers, assignments and work, taking tests and doing your job.

9. *Keep kids talking — wherever.*

To do that means making time for conversation and starting conversations. No question that this may be hard when they're looking at their smart phones constantly. Whether it's in the car going to and from somewhere or clearing the kitchen table, keep the conversation going when you are together.

10. *Not talking about education at home sends the message that you're not really interested in it.*

It's not as important as soccer practice or going shopping for a great sale. If you seem not to be interested in school, why should your kids be? When you show your interest, you'll see the difference.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY IN FRONT OF KIDS

Teaching is every bit as hard as parenting. In fact it's even harder because teachers have a lot more kids to take care of. Don't criticize teachers in front of your child. Only speak well of teachers and their efforts.

Parents have to remember to promote education in general and respect the efforts of individual teachers. If you have problems with the school, keep them to yourself and other adults. Otherwise, you undermine the