



## Managing Back-to-School Stress

Getting a new school year off to a good start can influence your child's attitude, confidence and performance both socially and academically. Your family's transition from summer to the fall school schedule can be stressful. Even children who are eager to return must adjust to the greater levels of activity, structure, and for some, pressures associated with school life.

As a parent, you can help your child manage the increased pace of life by planning ahead, being realistic and maintaining a positive attitude. Here are a few tips to help ease the transition and promote a successful school experience.

### Parent Tips for Getting Through the First Few Weeks

- Clear your own schedule. If possible, postpone business trips, volunteer meetings and extra projects

so you can be free to help your child acclimate to the school routine.

- Set alarm clocks early. Praise your child for prompt response to morning schedules and bus pickups. Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast and get to school.
- Review your child's schoolbooks. Talk about what your child will be learning during the year. Share your enthusiasm for the subjects and your confidence in your child's ability to master the content.
- Meet your child's teacher(s). Be sure to attend back-to-school night and introduce yourself to the teachers. Find out how they like to communicate with parents (e.g., through notes, e-mail, or phone calls). Convey a sincere desire to partner with your children's teachers to enhance your child's learning experience.

**Reading experts recommend students read at least 20 minutes every day outside of school hours. We know this can be tough to do with busy schedules. Learn how to squeeze more reading minutes into your daily routines by accepting the Just Take 20 challenge from the Florida Department of Education at [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org).**

**Come read with us!**  
Visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org) for fun family reading activities!

Just Take 20 is funded by the Florida Department of Education and managed by Just Read, Florida! and the Bureau of Family and Community Outreach.



## Raising a Reader

One of the most important supports families can offer is ensuring that children practice reading outside of school hours. –U.S. Department of Education

### Domino Effect of Cumulative Reading Practice

Kids who read a lot become better readers. Then they read even more often because we all enjoy doing things in which we excel! The domino effect is in motion as children who read more continue to get better at reading.

### Studies Show the Benefits of Reading Every Day

Why do reading experts recommend students read at least 20 minutes outside of school hours every day?

- Research proves that increased time spent reading increases vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, writing skills and confidence.
- Reading outside the classroom helps students experience the world around them and understand how literacy leads to college, career and beyond.
- Reading every day helps students form a positive habit, increasing the likelihood they will establish the value of lifelong literacy.

### 20 Minutes Adds Up!

Which do YOU want to be?	Student Read-a-lot	Student Read awhile	Student Read-a-little
Number of minutes you read at home each day:	20	5	1
Minutes you'll add up in a year:	3,600	900	180
Words you'll read per year:	1,800,000	282,000	8,000
Your predicted percentile on standardized tests:	90%	50%	10%
Total number of school days you'll have read from kindergarten to the end of 5th grade:	52	10	2 1/2

Visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org), a free family literacy resource from the Florida Department of Education. Go to [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org) to access effective at-home reading and writing activities. You can build a plan that works for your family on-the-go, finding those teachable moments to incorporate reading activities into your everyday, busy lives!

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## Count Your Books

Student reading achievement is related to the number of books and literacy materials found in the home. Studies show that having a large library in the house gives, on average, a 3.2-year education boost to children, regardless of the educational status of their parents. —National Assessment of Educational Progress

### Build a 3-D Bookshelf

One of the best home improvement projects you can do is build a home library with books on the shelf your child will be motivated to pick up and read. Follow these 3-Ds to guide your book selection:

- Dig the topics: Choose books on topics that are of high-interest to your child.
- unDemanding: Make sure the books are on your child's current reading level. Not too hard, nor too easy, but just right.

- Diverse: Being literate in today's world means you are able to read a wide range of text types for various purposes. So mix it up with the following text types:
  - » Leveled readers
  - » Chapter books
  - » Informational text
  - » Biographies
  - » Fiction – historical, contemporary, mystery, adventure, science fiction
  - » Poetry
  - » Plays
  - » Technical manuals
  - » Magazines/flyers/brochures
  - » Culturally diverse texts
  - » Music lyrics
  - » Comic books/graphic novels
  - » Digital texts
  - » Audio books
  - » English Language Learners (ELL) – books in your first language

Go to [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org) to learn more about creating a print-rich environment for your children in grades K-12. Just Take 20 is a family literacy campaign brought to you by the Florida Department of Education. Just Take 20 is a free resource to help Florida families develop the love of reading that leads to lifelong literacy!

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## Happy National Parent Involvement Day!

National Parent Involvement Day is a November holiday our school wants to celebrate with you! It is our yearly opportunity to honor and highlight the powerful contributions parents and caregivers provide in school and home to support student success.

### The Family Factor in Literacy Development

Thank you for conscientiously sending your child off to school every day and expecting him or her to do well. Students are motivated by their parents' high academic expectations. In regards to your child's literacy development, it is your parent involvement in reading and writing activities that makes a big difference.

According to research studies:

- The number one predictor of a child's success in school is his or her family support system.  
—Harvard Family Research Project

- A home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than the family's income, education level or cultural background. —Henderson & Berla
- Reading achievement is more dependent on learning activities in the home than either math or science.  
—The College Board
- Reading is considered the gateway to success in other academic areas as well. —The College Board
- Of all academic subjects, reading is the most sensitive to family influence. —The College Board
- The single most important activity you can do for building the knowledge required for reading success is reading aloud to your kids. —A Nation at Risk

**Our school wants to support your efforts to be involved in your child's learning. Talk with your child's teacher(s) about which specific at-home literacy activities found on the web app [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org) will benefit your child the most.**

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## Give a Gift That Lasts a Lifetime

During the holidays and other gift-giving occasions, the lure of gifts for kids, such as electronic gadgets and fashionable clothes, can be strong. It is no wonder such items top most kids' lists given our material-driven advertising culture. It's fine to indulge in a few such items. However, it is very important to include the gift of books, as well, because the impact books have on children's lives lasts a lot longer than the latest video game. The love of literacy lasts a lifetime.

### The Messages a Book Gift Sends Your Child

- Gifting a book sends a message to your kids that literacy is one of your core family values.
- Although there are many educational gifts you can give that teach, children's books go deeper by engaging the mind and imagination.
- Establishing a tradition of giving books on holidays, birthdays or other family celebrations can help to grow lifelong readers and build a library for your child that will be passed on to future generations.
- Books can be thoughtful and thought-provoking

presents. Giving a book is a way of connecting with your child's inner life, showing excitement for his or her deepest interests and eliciting meaningful conversations.

### Best Book Picks

Similar to the community library, a good home collection includes classic books as well as current best-selling books that are of high-interest to millennial kids. The books you buy don't necessarily have to be new or expensive. You can get great deals by searching for books in the following ways:

- Finding deals at school book fairs
- Buying books from club order deals sent home from school
- Cruising garage sales
- Exploring used book stores
- Sorting through library discard book sales
- Ordering discount magazine subscriptions
- Asking relatives to also give book gifts

**The time you spend with your children is also an invaluable gift they will treasure for a lifetime. Make that time count by taking part in Florida's Just Take 20 family literacy campaign. You will learn simple and effective ways to support your child's literacy development. Go to [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org).**

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## New Year's Reading Resolution

For many of us, the New Year means it's time to take stock of our lives and vow to improve things we don't like. Adults benefit from New Year's resolutions and so can our children. Keeping resolutions can teach a lot about self-discipline and the value of making goals, especially educational goals.

### Make It a Family Activity

Make resolutions a family tradition. Sit down together and reflect on the past year, discussing accomplishments and goals – as individuals and as a family. Discuss what worked this year and what didn't. You might start the brainstorming session for resolutions by saying, "Let's focus on resolutions that will make us feel better about ourselves and how our family works."

Resolutions for the entire family that focus on education might include planning a monthly educational outing (e.g., museum, lecture, planetarium), playing board games twice a month or turning off the TV early each night to enjoy reading a book together.

Make a master list to hang on your refrigerator or bulletin board where everyone can be reminded to work towards keeping the resolutions throughout the year.

**Make a family resolution to complete a target number of literacy activities on the Florida Department of Education's web application at [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org).**

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### Different Resolutions for Different Ages

- **Elementary and Middle School** – Children in this age range can comprehend a resolution and participate in the process of picking one. What your child needs to work on is personal, so work with your child to focus on areas for improvement he or she can relate to, such as a subject in school he or she struggles with or oversleeping and missing the bus.
- **High School** – When your child becomes a teen, focus more on the child taking more responsibility for his actions, including taking care of his or her body, balancing social life with academic demands, dealing with stress in a healthy way, talking through conflict and resisting negative peer pressure.

### Serve as a Role Model

Celebrate Literacy Week falls in January each year. Just as with everything else you do, your child is watching. So thank you for being a good role model for your child by making literacy a focus in your family's New Year's resolutions.



## Do You Love Reading?

Did you know that only 20% of Americans who can read, do read? It's unfortunate that 80% of us are missing out on the joys reading can bring.

If you love reading, chances are you developed your love affair with reading as a child. Unfortunately, the reverse can also be true. What can you do to ensure your child develops the love of reading that leads to lifelong literacy?

Reading experts tell us that when children enjoy reading, they are more likely to do more of it, leading to improved ability. Once reading skills are mastered, children enjoy the activity that much more. Most importantly, children who fall in love with books eventually grow up to be adults who continue their love affair with reading, enhancing their quality of life.

### Help Your Child Fall in Love With Reading

Becoming literate is a lifelong, intellectual process. This process typically begins during childhood, a time in development when family influence is the predominant

factor. In sum, lifelong literacy is a behavior or disposition typically acquired from the family a child grows up with. The reduced time available to read for pleasure during school hours these days makes it more important than ever that parents read to children at home.

### Share the Love

Following these tips will help your child experience joy in reading rather than seeing it as a hurdle to complete an assignment or pass a test in school.

- Have reading material of high-interest to your child available in your home.
- Visit the library regularly and let your child choose the books he or she wants to check out.
- Make reading part of your daily family routine.
- Read aloud to your child daily.
- Talk about what you are reading.
- Listen to audio books on long rides in the car.
- Be a role model, making sure your child sees you reading for pleasure.

To learn more specific activities that foster the love of reading in children, visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org). Just Take 20 is a free resource offered by the Florida Department of Education.

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## Five Good Reasons to March On Down to the Library!

Libraries are a wonderful community resource for everyone because they have books, videos, music, newspapers, computers and much more for children and adults — and these resources are available to the public for free!

You can check books and other materials out of the library by signing up for a free library card. Usually you will be able to check out materials for a few weeks at a time. When you're done with those books, you return them to the library, and exchange them for more. If you forget to return books and materials on time, you may need to pay a small fine.

1. Regular library visits inevitably lead to more reading. Research shows that reading actually affects brain development positively. When kids read or are read to, their brain cells are literally turned on, and existing links among brain cells are strengthened and new cell links are formed.
2. You can expose your children to more books and magazines than you can afford to buy. Sure, you

can take your kids to the children's section of a nearby bookstore – and you should! But if you're like most of us, you're on a budget. At the library, you can haul out as much as you can carry, turn your books back in as soon as they're read, and take home a whole new pile.

3. The librarian can recommend books that you may not know of or think to suggest to your child. Most libraries also have sections for children and teens. The library employees can guide you in selecting books of high interest. You can also find books for children and adults in both English and Spanish.
4. Library time is active, not passive. You won't see shushing librarians in today's libraries. Most libraries offer regular programs for kids that make stories come to life and programs for teens that help them connect with other reading teens.
5. Owning a library card teaches kids responsibility. As card-carrying library patrons, young kids learn about treating with care things that belong to others.

So get your child a library card today! Visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org) for ideas about how you can help your child check out books they will be motivated to read.

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## Purposes of Testing

Testing is a part of your child's school experience, and it is also a part of all our lives. Even as adults, we continue to take tests for things, such as driver's licenses, job training, skill certifications, etc. Testing can be stressful for some children, but there are many things you can do as a parent to help your children learn to feel confident and relaxed when taking a test.

There are many different purposes for testing and many types of tests. Basically, testing gives us insights into what a learner does or does not know (or is able to do or not do) at the time of the test. Reviewing your child's test results with their teachers and with your child can help everyone become aware of areas of strength and weakness so your child's learning needs can best be met. In other words, when we focus on how we can positively use test results to increase the effectiveness of future learning experiences, students benefit.

### Two Tips To Help Your Child Do His/Her Best on the Test

- 1. Boosting Test-Taking Confidence:** Studies show that when learners believe they are capable and can do something well, they perform better when tested in that area. There are two parts to building

your child's test-taking confidence. First, make sure his/her confidence is built on the strong foundation of having studied and prepared well. Second, make sure you continually convey positive messages to your child about how well he/she knows the material (because of sound preparation) and that you believe in your child's ability to demonstrate his/her learning on any given test. When your child performs well on a test, make sure you attribute it back to the child's preparation and personal abilities to demonstrate learning. When your child hears often enough what a "good test taker" he/she is, your child's self-efficacy for testing grows, and that, in turn, will result in better performance on tests.

- 2. Setting Kids Up for Success on Test Days:** Before every school day, but especially on test days, it is important to make sure your child has eaten a good breakfast and slept well the night before. Before you send your child off to school, boost your child's confidence by pointing out that he/she has put the time and effort into preparing for the test and you are proud of his/her dedication to learning, which is the most important thing.

Learn even more great ways to help your child feel relaxed and confident when taking tests at [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org). This free resource from the Florida Department of Education supports families in promoting the love of reading that leads to lifelong literacy.

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## Kids Never Outgrow Being Read To by Parents

Studies show the number one predictor of a child's success in learning to read is how often parents read to their children at home. And kids don't outgrow the benefits of being read aloud to because developing readers in grades K-12 can comprehend on a higher level than they can read themselves. Try the following tips to make your next read-aloud session both educational and engaging.

### Tips for Reading Aloud to Kids

1. **Plan ahead.** Select a book that will be of high interest to your child. Rehearse how you will do tips 2-10.
2. **Size up the book.** Introduce the book by reading the author/illustrator's name(s) and eliciting predictions of what the story may be about. If there is background knowledge your child will need in order to get the most from the learning experience, review that information with them beforehand.
3. **Read expressively.** Effective readers visualize as they read. It's as if they are creating a movie in their "mind's eye." You can encourage your child to employ this strategy by performing a dramatic reading using lots of expression for different character's voices.
4. **Adjust reading rate.** Gauge how quickly or

slowly to read by observing your child's degree of attentiveness. Children's minds tend to wander less when the stimuli you want them to attend to is presented at a rate that requires an uninterrupted flow of brain power to follow.

5. **Explore unfamiliar words.** When you come across vocabulary that you think your child doesn't know, pause the story and think aloud to model the cognitive process of determining a likely meaning. Talk about how you are using context clues, your background knowledge, etc.
6. **Make personal connections.** Effective readers connect with the text in some way in order to improve understanding.
7. **Pause to make comments.** Make comments that help advance the storyline.
8. **Actively involve listeners.** Allow your child to be more than a passive listener by periodically asking questions.
9. **Finish with a review.** Flip back through the pages and ask your child to review key parts of the story using his or her own words. Discuss key concepts.
10. **Extend the learning experience.** Relate the reading to your child's daily life in some way and have fun doing a related art project or cooking activity.

To learn more specific activities that foster the love of reading in children, visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org). Just Take 20 is a free resource offered by the Florida Department of Education.

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## Summer Brain Drain is a Downer

Summer is great as a break from school, but it doesn't have to be a break from learning. Summer "Brain Drain," also known as the "Summer Slide" is a term commonly used to describe the learning loss that takes place for many students during summer months. Brain Drain occurs when the extended break from structured learning and scheduled academic work makes the mind lazy and makes it easier to forget material that has already been learned.

Studies show that kids can lose as much as two to three months of reading skills over the summer. Another study found that 66 percent of teachers said they're spending three to four weeks at the beginning of the school year teaching old concepts and skills that have been forgotten.

### Boosting Brain Power Over the Summer Break

- Explore New Interests:** Use the slower pace of summer to really get to know your child through conversation. Pay attention to what sparks your child's interest and do what you can to line up opportunities to explore those interests more in depth.

- Read, Read, Read:** Kids are more likely to read if what they're reading about is of high interest to them. Children can learn through various mediums that connect to text. So think outside the book box. Reading material is all around us ... online articles, magazines, digital books, recipes, craft instructions, gaming manuals, etc.
- Listen Up:** Research reveals the important link between being a good listener and being a good reader. Audio books allow students to access literature up to two grade levels above their current reading level since listening takes away the burden of having to decode complex words. When they are later required to decode more complex text, they'll have an easier time since the words will already be familiar to them.
- Plug In:** Take advantage of the platforms and media your kids are already using on a day-to-day basis. There are many innovative mobile apps and digital programs that can help kids learn from the comfort of their computer, smart phones or tablets. These apps allow kids to explore areas of interest and learn new things in an interactive, engaging way.

Include Just Take 20 in your family's summer plans. You can learn more about this free family resource from the Florida Department of Education at [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org).

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