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# Families Matter

## Make Homework a Priority

Although Oklahoma school children spend about seven hours per day in a learning environment at school, parents also play a vital role in the educational process.

When children bring school work home, a parent needs to be involved in that aspect of education. The value of homework extends beyond the classroom. Good assignments that are completed successfully can help children develop positive habits and attitudes toward learning. In addition, a homework assignment helps parents learn about their child's education and provides an opportunity for parents to be involved in the educational process. It's important for parents to show enthusiasm for learning in an effort to spark that same enthusiasm in their child. Children need to know that their parents believe homework is important.

It is helpful to determine a schedule to complete

homework assignments. This should include a regular time to begin and a place free of distraction. Supplies and other resources should be readily available so that time is not wasted searching for pencils, notebook paper, a dictionary, glue, markers or other necessities. Turn off the television if it is distracting.

It is important to monitor your child's homework assignments, but be careful about actually doing the assignment for the child. Make yourself available to answer questions about the assignment. If a parent does the work for the child, the child won't become confident in his or her own abilities. Sometimes there is a fine line between supporting and doing. Also check over assignments as your child finishes them.

Something else parents need to consider is their child's learning style. Some children are visual learners. In this situation, drawing a picture or a

chart can help the child better understand the lesson. For example, if a child is learning about the different bones in the body, he or she may have difficulty simply remembering the difference between the tibia and the fibula. However, drawing a picture and labeling the bones can help the child retain the information.

Children who are more auditory learners may need to listen to a story or have directions read to them. Too much written material may cause confusion.

Homework is an essential part of the learning process and it's very important for parents to be involved. It may take a while to help your child develop good study habits, but the effort is worthwhile. Working with both the teacher and your child can help prevent homework hassles and will encourage a positive learning environment.

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## Are You Storing Food Safely? Storage Basics

**Refrigerate or freeze perishables right away.** Foods that require refrigeration should be put in the refrigerator as soon as you get them home. Stick to the "two-hour rule" for leaving items needing refrigeration out at room temperature. Never allow meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, or produce or other foods that require refrigeration to sit at room temperature for more than two hours—one hour if the air temperature is above 90°F. This also applies to items such as leftovers, "doggie bags," and take-out foods. Also, when putting food away, don't crowd the refrigerator or freezer so tightly that air can't circulate.

**Keep your appliances at the proper temperatures.** Keep the refrigerator temperature at or below 40°F (4°C). The freezer

temperature should be 0°F (-18°C). Check temperatures periodically. Appliance thermometers are the best way of knowing these temperatures and are generally inexpensive.



ready-to-eat foods such as luncheon meats should be used as soon as possible. The longer they're stored in the refrigerator, the more chance *Listeria*, a bacterium that causes foodborne illness, can grow, especially if the refrigerator temperature is above 40°F (4°C).

**Check storage directions on labels.** Many items other than meats, vegetables, and dairy products need to be kept cold. For instance, mayonnaise and ketchup should go in the refrigerator after opening. If you've neglected to properly refrigerate something, it's usually best to throw it out.

**Use ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible.** Refrigerated

**Be alert for spoiled food.** Anything that looks or smells suspicious should be thrown out. Mold is a sign of spoilage. It can grow even under refrigeration. Mold is not a major health threat, but it can make food unappetizing. The safest practice is to discard food that is moldy.

Source U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Children Need Nutritious Snacks

Because children's stomachs are small they need to eat more frequently. Snacks are important for providing adequate nutrition. Parents need to teach children how to snack wisely.

Provide snacks that are as nutritious as the foods served at mealtimes. Snacks can even be mealtime foods served individually over time, instead of all at once on one plate.

When providing snacks to children, think of the MyPyramid food groups and offer snacks such as pieces of cheese,

tangerine slices, and peanut butter on whole-wheat crackers. Snacks that are easy to prepare should be readily available to children, especially if they arrive home from school before their parents.

### Healthy snacking tips:

- Spread snacks throughout the day. Try not to do all snacking in the evening.
- Use snacks to fill nutritional gaps in your diet.
- Snacks should help meet caloric needs, not exceed them.

- Keep healthy snacks on hand at home and work.
- Keep portion sizes under control. Use single serve containers, and portion snacks ahead of time.
- Do not eat directly out of large packages such as popcorn tins and cracker boxes.
- Treat snacks as small meals rather than special treats.
- Choose foods that are low in fat and sugars, and high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

## Kids and Allowance

Providing your children with allowances may help them learn about making wise money decisions. There is no right or wrong way to provide children with money, as families differ in their attitudes and values about money. It's a family decision.

Allowances are of two types: earned income, where children are paid for completing responsibilities such as chores; and entitled income, where children are given an amount of money on a regular basis.

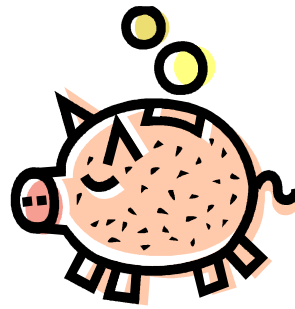
Allowances may offer both benefits and challenges for a family. Since allowances provide predictable amounts of money for children, it allows the child to practice basic money management skills and encourages independence and

responsibility.

An allowance may challenge parents, who may be unsure how much money to give a child, or may worry the money might be misused. Regardless of the type of allowance chosen, the key is providing a way for children to practice making money decisions and learn from their mistakes.

### Guidelines for allowances:

- Be consistent in the timing, amount and limits of an allowance.
- Let children learn from their own spending decisions.
- Don't always come to the rescue, as kids can learn from consequences and their mistakes.



- Practice goal setting and planning for future needs.
- Remember that children will differ in their ideas and goals about money.
- Be patient--kids need time to learn about money. Patient adults can set the stage for a positive learning environment for their children.

It's important for parents to encourage good communication, consistency and guidance when offering allowances to children.

An allowance may be a good way to involve kids in seeing where their money is going and thinking about the decisions they're making.

Source University of Minnesota Extension

## Character Counts- Responsibility

***You are the most important teacher your child will ever have.***

There are many ways you can help your child learn to be responsible. Preschool children enjoy having jobs at which they can succeed. Helping at home makes children feel important and know they are contributing to the family.

Simple chores children can do at home include setting the table, clearing their plates after a meal, taking their clothes to the laundry, helping fold clothes, watering plants or feeding pets.

Making a simple chart for your

refrigerator may be an easy way to keep track of your family jobs. Your child will enjoy filling in the chart while marking that a job is complete.

### Things children learn while they are performing different tasks:

- When your child sets the table...she is counting, separating, and sorting. All are important math skills.
- When your child folds the laundry...he is sorting and matching. These are math skills. He is also developing coordination, which will help him when he learns to write.

- When your child waters plants or feeds the pets...she is learning what all things need to grow. Also, pouring water is a fun way to develop coordination.

I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do  
everything,  
I will not refuse to do the  
something  
that I can do.

Edward Everett Hale

## Oklahoma State University

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## The Parenting Journey—Enjoy the View at Insight

**Understand development:** It takes a long time to learn how to grow up. Some parents rush their children, expecting them to walk, talk, or share before they are able. We should be patient with children and learn about realistic expectations for children.

**Understand your child:** Every child is unique. We should study each child's strengths and preferences. We can learn what each child likes to do. We then can focus on their strengths and give them opportunities to develop and use them.

**Understand children's circumstances:** Sometimes children get into trouble because they are bored, tired or confused. We should help them find interesting things to do. When children are upset, we can help them calm down by holding them, rocking them, or listening to them. We should help them feel safe in a changing world.

Source: Arkansas State Extension [www.arfamily.org](http://www.arfamily.org)

## Quick Fix Meal Idea

### Stovetop Chicken and Rice

2 pounds of chicken, de-boned  
2 cups uncooked rice  
1 can condensed cream of mushroom soup (10 1/2 ounces)  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1/4 cup parmesan cheese  
1 cup sliced mushrooms  
1 clove garlic (minced)  
1 medium onion  
1 tablespoon oil  
Salt and pepper

Heat oil in a large skillet at medium heat. Add chicken and cook until brown on all sides. Add the mushrooms, onions

and garlic. Cook for 1-2 minutes. Add the mushroom cream and milk. Stir and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Add rice, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. Cover and stir until the rice is ready.

### Orange Berry Pears

1 1/2 cups orange juice  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
1 (3 inch) cinnamon stick  
4 large pears, peeled, halved and cored  
1/2 cup fresh or frozen raspberries

Bring orange juice, brown sugar and cinnamon stick to a boil in a large sauce pan. Reduce heat; cook and stir until sugar is dissolved. Add pears; cover, simmer for 15-20 minutes or until pears are tender. Use a slotted spoon to remove pears to serving dish. Garnish with raspberries and drizzle with poaching liquid.

Visit <http://oces.okstate.edu/cleveland>

