

Use Your Newspaper to Boost Your Child's Grades

Five minutes every Sunday with this paper could be one of the greatest gifts you will ever give your youngster

By EUGENE M. SCHWARTZ

Author of "How to Double Your Child's Grades in School"



The author tried out his teaching methods on his son.

HOW MUCH will your son earn in his lifetime? What kind of career will he carve out for himself?

Will he be a winner or a loser in life's deadly serious competition for money, position, self-respect?

The answers to these questions depend overwhelmingly on your child's ability to absorb facts and figures and to put them to use. And girls need this facility as much as boys.

This article is designed to help you help your child increase that priceless ability—using only this newspaper, five minutes of your time every Sunday, plus a few thought-provoking questions listed below.

How to Increase Your Child's Vocabulary

Words are compressed ideas. They are solidified thoughts which enable your child to think better, reason logically, express his own ideas with a force and drama that persuade other people to follow his point of view. Therefore, the more words your child learns, the better.

1. "Let's learn to build a stronger sentence."

Pick up any page of this paper. Take a headline or sentence at random and read it to your child. For instance: "American Troops Advance Against Reds." Now ask your child whether he can take this same idea and build a stronger sentence around it.

For example, your child might say, "American Troops Cut Through the Jungle After Fleeing Reds." Encourage him to use vivid words that excite the interest of the listener. Urge him to use larger, more complex words that he may have just learned so he won't forget them. Use this game two or three minutes every Sunday.

2. "What does this newly learned

word really mean to you?"

Now teach him to recognize new words instantly by breaking the words down into their Latin parts and then seeing how the total meaning of the Latin parts adds up to the total meaning of the new word.

Get a good dictionary or any other book that lists the meaning of these Latin parts. Skim through your paper for a minute or two every Sunday and pick out some words which are new to your child and which are primarily composed of these Latin parts.

For example, in this article I have used a number of Latin-derived words. Let's take one of these words, and break it apart. *Facility* comes from the Latin word-part *fac*, which means (in English) *do*. Therefore, *facility* means the ability to do something.

But why stop there? Once your child has learned a new word-part, ask him to explore it further. What other words can he think of that have this word-part, *fac*, in them?

How about *factory*—a place where you *do* things with machinery. Or the adjective *facile*—a *facile* person is a person who can *do* things easily. Or even the frightening word *factotum*—which is nothing more than a person whom you hire to *do* something for you in your absence.

You can see immediately how fascinating this can become. Why not learn one or two new word-parts each Sunday—and start your child on the road to a great vocabulary!

How to Increase Your Child's Reading Speed and Skill

The child who cannot read cannot learn. The child who cannot read fast, and well, and remember what he reads, is forever crippled in life's race for achievement and success. Above all other goals, you should work with your child at least a few

minutes every week to improve his reading skill. For instance:

1. "What would happen if you bit a pencil while you read?"

Some children move their lips when they read and this means trouble. "Lip reading" means your child is slowing his reading speed down to normal talking speed—or only about one-third of his true potential.

But you can help him correct this bad habit. Hand him this newspaper and ask him to read a short news story to himself. Time him. Then take an ordinary wooden pencil, put it between his teeth, and ask him to bite it! Now have him read another story of the same length. Time him again—this time with the pencil between his teeth to prevent his lips from moving.

I think you will be delighted with the new speed he automatically picks up from this simple trick. And keep it up—keep him biting—until he can read even the hardest textbook without moving his lips in the slightest.

2. "Let's see if you can read this story in one minute flat—by asking the right questions."

Good reading is essentially a search for the main thoughts of a story. And your child can find the main thoughts by asking the magic questions: what? why? where? when? who? how? Your child should memorize these six tiny keys to knowledge and use them every day.

They offer him a "road map" to any news story or feature. Now he knows what to look for. Now he can simply skim through the story—flashing over unimportant details—concentrating on the answers to his "main thought" questions.

He should be able to finish the story in about one minute. And you can test his retention of the important facts of the story by asking him questions about it when he has finished.

How to Increase Your Child's Ability to Handle Figures

Now turn to the advertisements in this paper. Here you have all the material you need for a quick (and fascinating) three-minute drill in practical, everyday mathematics.

Take a supermarket ad, for instance, hand your youngster a piece of paper and a pencil, and ask him a question like this: "If I went to the supermarket tomorrow and bought a roast for \$6.49, a chicken for \$3.27, and some vegetables for \$8.14, how much money would I have spent? How much change would I get from a \$20 bill?"

Now watch him put those figures down on the paper. No matter how bad your math is, you can always check two vital points at a glance. First, does he make each number clear and sharp? Or does his 4, for example, look like a 9 or a 7? If so, he'll make careless mistakes with these numbers the rest of his life. Drill him over and over again till each figure is as sharp and precise as if he wrote it with a typewriter.

Second, are his addition columns perfectly straight? Are the 1s under the 1s, the 10s under the 10s, the 100s under the 100s? Can you draw a line between each column with a ruler without touching a single figure? If not, he is again in trouble.

Research in schools has shown that correcting these two small mistakes—and nothing else—has increased students' grades in math by as much as 20 percent overnight. That's one-fifth higher grades for your child for just a few minutes of your time.

If he's in the higher grades, of course, make the questions harder. For example: "If a roast is marked down from \$6.98 to \$4.87, what percentage of my money do I save?" Again check neatness and accuracy in copying down the problem and pre-

(Continued on page 15)

Boost Your Child's Grades

(Cont. from page 6)

cision in working it out. Do not check the method or the answer; leave that to his teacher. In this way, no matter how limited or rusty your own math is, you can help sharpen your child's.

How to Increase Your Child's Test Grades

Now comes the payoff—the crucial moment when your child shows what he learns and that he can put it to use. In life, as in school, your child will be faced with a series of tests. Some are written, some are verbal, some are economic or social or moral. So he might as well get used to doing his best in them right now.

The big crippler in taking tests is nervousness. Research shows that the main cause for test-room nervousness is the unfamiliar phraseology of most test questions. The more familiar a child becomes with the form these questions will take, the better his grades will be.

Therefore, your job in your Sunday reviews with this newspaper is to spend a minute or two familiarizing your child with these question formats. To do this, you again have him learn a new word or read a story or do a math problem as we have described above. Then you ask him questions about what he has done.

But you phrase these questions exactly as they would be phrased in a school test.

And he answers them the same way he would answer them in that test.

Commonly used formats are true-false; multiple choice; matching; completion ("A factotum is a person who _____ something for you"); enumeration ("List four words using the Latin word-part *fac*").

Others are sequence ("List, in order, the three missions the Gemini 11 flight was designed to accomplish"); analogy ("A factotum is to an agent as a factory is to: a. skillful person; b. manufacturing plant; c. acquired skill"); essay ("Discuss in one or two sentences the purpose of the Gemini 11 mission and what space flights will follow it").

There they are. They look, and are, tricky at first. But they get easier and easier for your child as you give him more and more practice in answering questions phrased in these formats.

This, then, is a condensed Sunday program—designed to enable you to use this newspaper to raise your child's grades. It should take only a few minutes each week—and should give you a fascinating activity to share with your child.

In the competitive world of grade-averages and achievements he lives in, it may be the greatest gift, besides love, you can give him. ♦