



Practical ideas for secondary learners

Education Changes Lives

Education changes lives. It opens the door to new dreams and expectations. It provides strong foundations for adult life, improves self-esteem and gives a positive self-image.

The best foster carers are strong advocates for the education of their children, supporting their learning at school and in the home and challenging others to do the same.

7 key ways to help your child learn:

8. Foster Confidence and Self-Belief
9. Always have High Expectations
10. Motivate through Praise and Encouragement
11. Inspire High Aspirations
12. Reward Effort, Ignore failure
13. Build on your child's strengths
14. Show interest, give time



Is your home a learning home?

For starters ...

- Is education given high status by all in your household?
- Are your child's school certificates and rewards publicly displayed and celebrated?
- Is your child's school timetable displayed where all can see it (maybe the fridge?)
- Are important school dates, such as PEPs, Parents Evenings, information sessions, sports events, plays, concerts, displayed where you won't forget them?
- Does your child have a table with good light to do homework and coursework?
- When your child is doing home learning, does s/he have a quiet place to do it, without the distraction of TV?
- Is the computer in a place where you can monitor its use?



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Using technology

You don't have to be a genius in Calculus or Trigonometry to support your child - technology is there to help you!

Here are some tips for you...

- Most schools now have their own intranet learning site. Get your child to demonstrate it to you and encourage them to use it. Otherwise ask the Designated Teacher to show you how to use it
- Many schools have learning and revision packages, such as BBC Bitesize, Sam Learning etc., accessible through their own website. Ask about them during PEP meetings and parents' evenings, and encourage your child to use them
- Be able to use search engines (Google, Bing etc.) to find relevant information quickly
- Use YouTube for demonstrations on anything from physics to fractions
- Teach your child not to copy directly from the internet and then present it as their own. S/he must internalise what they learn and present it in their own words
- Learn about internet safety yourself, teach your child about being safe and constantly reinforce the message. For advice and young person friendly materials to teach about online safety, go to www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- Monitor your child's use of the internet by using Parental Controls. These are available from all mainstream providers such as BT, Sky etc.



A word about homework

Whilst helping with homework & coursework, be sure not to do it for them!

- **Read through their homework diary** with them and discuss with them what they have to do. If they frequently don't understand the work set, let their teacher know (by phone call, note, email)
- **Talk is essential**, but be sure it's a 2-way dialogue rather than simply questioning. For example, ask them to explain how to do science and maths problems, so that they have to put it into words.
- Don't ask if their reading book is good, ask them to tell you about the main characters and what they do. Get them to explain the "off-side rule" clearly.
- Encourage them to use different ways of learning. **Visual learners** retain knowledge better by using mind maps, spidergrams, bullet points, diagrams & flowcharts, coloured highlighters and drawing.
- **Aural Learners** are helped by saying things out loud, explaining to others, listening to music and using rhymes and songs to remember whilst **kinaesthetic learners** do best through moving, pacing about the room, tapping their foot, sticking up post-it notes and hand-writing notes.
- **Check your child's homework** with them; help them to spot mistakes and to redraft it if necessary. Discuss with them whether they have made the improvements suggested by their teacher in the last piece of work.
- **Praise them** for what they have done well; do not dwell on what they have not done well.
- Two heads are better than one! Discussing homework and revising with their friends and in groups can be very positive, provided they stay on task.

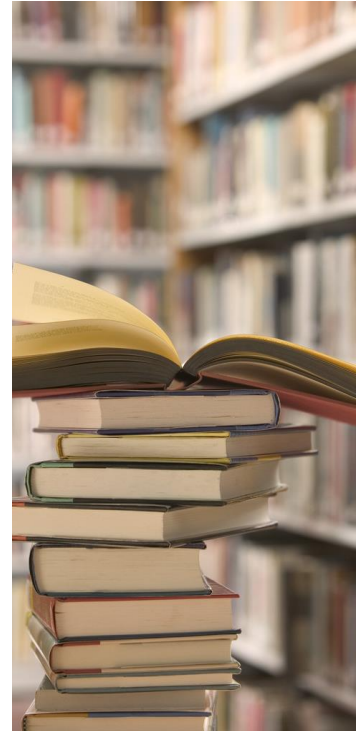
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Improving Literacy Skills

Reading with your child must be one of the most enjoyable ways in which you can support their learning. Reading improves listening and concentration skills, develops comprehension, stretches the imagination, improves word power and, above all ...provides escape into another world when things are tough.

A few tips ...

- Make your home a place where reading is part of daily life. Read yourself. Talk about what you have read in newspapers, books or magazines.
- Show reading is important: make specific time for it, turn off the TV, snuggle up on the sofa...
- Build your own collection of books at home. If possible get books that feature characters or storylines that will help children and young people make sense of their own life.
- Show respect for books and keep them safe. Help them join the local library and use it.
- Read their books and, once old *enough*, give them yours so you can chat about them
- Keep in touch with school and ask specifically about reading and writing
- Keep a dictionary and thesaurus in an easily accessible place and use it
- Find out if there are any age appropriate book clubs they could join
- How about investing in a Kindle?
- Get them helping younger children with their reading and writing
- Encourage them to write short stories and poems
- Get them to write "To Do" lists, shopping lists, recipes, rules, revision time-tables etc.



If you have any concerns about your foster child's reading, writing or numeracy, NEVER keep quiet about it. Talk to their Designated Teacher, their subject teachers (at Parents' Evening) and discuss it at their PEP.

Efficient numeracy skills are essential for all walks of life so:

- **Budget, budget, budget.** Don't tell them what they can afford with their clothing allowance. Get them to sit down with prices and work it out for themselves - with your help if needed
- **Talk about** credit cards, how you pay the rent and mortgage, how much weekly benefits pay and the challenge of budgeting on this amount
- **Encourage** them to open a bank account maybe with text alerts when money is running low
- **Discuss** which is the best value mobile phone package
- Keep modelling good number skills and keep talking about numbers
- Talk about what maths they are learning at school and look for ways to make connections between school work and daily life. Pretend you have forgotten to do things such as working out percentages, and ask them to show you.
- Keep working on reading timetables and planning time

A few more things

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Take a full part in your child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- Talk with your child before each PEP and prepare well
- Prepare questions you want to ask, such as what support is being given and whether it is having an impact
- Reassure them that it is beneficial for them
- Ask them if they would like you to speak on their behalf about what is going well at school, and anything that is not going well
- Ensure you have done anything you said you would at the last PEP
- If you are unsure about anything at the PEP, just ASK
- If you disagree with anything, just SAY SO
- If you feel shy, just remember for whom you are doing it!
- ADVOCATE for your foster child – they're worth it!

Transition from secondary school

All young people must be in education, or training (apprenticeships, work experience etc.) until 18

- **Change** is often difficult for Children looked after, so they need to be well-prepared
- It is essential to continuously foster **high aspirations** and talk frequently about future career choices
- **Begin in Year 9** with GCSE Option Choices. Attend school Option Choice Information sessions, take advice from the school, observe what the child is good at and enjoys
- Encourage a broad choice to keep future doors open rather than narrowing down
- Begin preparing for the **6th Form** in Year 10
- Know your child, how they are expected to perform at GCSE but remember that children in care often take longer to reach goals than others
- Research the **different education providers**: schools with sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges and the courses they provide and discuss with your young person which one would suit them best
- Research the **different education pathways** available (A'Levels, BTECs, NVQs, Apprenticeships etc.) and discuss with your young person which one suits best

Nine tenths of education is encouragement!

Anatole France



