

Tips on Helping your Little with Academics



1. Start off by hanging out and catching up with each other's lives. Bridge the gap between the classroom and tutoring by discussing what has transpired in the classroom (e.g. what is being studied; how they think they're doing in class).
2. When it's time to work on homework and your mentee wants to continue to talk, let them know that you can talk more at the end of the session, then keep your word. If they flatly state that they do not want to do the work, explain calmly and firmly why they need this extra help and then continue.
3. Keep your expectations and directions brief. Too much "teacher talk" can be confusing and interfere with remembering. State the purpose of the assignment you will be working on (e.g. to increase reading comprehension, practice spelling/math) and begin.
4. Share personal experiences only if you feel they will clarify a concept or provide meaningful background for new material. Be careful not to "preach".
5. Praise specific behaviors rather than right answers. For example, you should praise effort, attention and perseverance. Praising right answers, on the other hand, unnecessarily sheds a negative light on the wrong answers. You should, however, give clear and immediate feedback for responses, such as "Yes, that's correct" or "No, look at it again."
6. If your mentee begins to make many mistakes, modify the task so that it is easier. For instance, take turns reading aloud or re-read an earlier lesson as review.
7. If your mentee becomes upset by their errors, remind them that mistakes are a part of learning and provide opportunities for new learning. Allow them to correct some of their own work then praise them for spotting errors.
8. If your mentee has difficulty with a question, rephrase it, possibly giving two choices for responses. Later, return to the question allowing opportunity for a correct response.
9. Many students have trouble retaining difficult concepts. Tackle just one part of the total task at a time (e.g. one-third of a spelling list or ten of the nation's states and capitals) and work until the concept is mastered. Quality of learning is more important than quantity.
10. At the close of the session make a verbal statement of everything they are really improving on and set goals for the next time you see each other. Praise your Little for their hard work.

