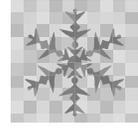


Winter Express for Parents



Using the TV to Teach

Use the time you allow your child to watch television to reinforce what they've learned in school. Below are simple questions that you can ask your child during TV viewing that can help them with reading and writing skills.

During advertisements that interrupt a story or cartoon, ask your child: *"What do you think will happen next? Why do you think that?"*

How this helps your child: They will be making **predictions** based on what they have already learned about the story. Making predictions like this is important in reading.

As you change channels on your TV, ask your child: *"Do you think this show is fiction (not true) or non-fiction (true or informational). Why do you think that?"*

How this helps your child: Students have to learn the **characteristics of fiction and non-fiction**. They need to use terms like characters, plot, setting, facts, and information.

While watching a story or cartoon on TV, ask: *"Why do you think the story is taking place where it is? Could it have happened somewhere totally different?"*

How this helps your child: In reading and writing, children need to understand how the **setting** (where and when) relates to the story.

While watching a story or cartoon on TV, ask this question about one of the characters: *"What kind of person is he/she? Why do you think that?"*

How this helps your child: They need to identify the **character traits** and how the writer has told us what the character is like.

At the end of a TV show, ask your child: *"What was this show all about?"*

How this helps your child: They need to learn to **summarize** a story without retelling it. What was the main idea?

Writing Adventures

After the holidays, have your child write thank-you notes to friends and relatives. They can make their own stationery, decorated with crayons, markers, or stickers.

Have your child make a journal or diary to write in daily. Use pretty, leftover holiday cards as the cover and insert paper in the middle. Staple it, and you'll have a nice homemade journal! Your child can record the events of the day, feelings, and can make up good stories. Little ones can "tell" by drawing pictures.

Challenge your child to create a poem. Acrostic poems are easy to create. Write a winter word vertically on the paper. Let your child describe the word that begins with each of its letters. For example:

Sitting by the fire
Logs burning into ashes
Exciting days in the snow
Dogs enjoy the season, too!

Have your child save souvenirs from different winter events—ticket stubs from the movies, a travel brochure from a trip, a recipe that was made. Store all of the souvenirs in a seal-top bag. Use these as reminders to write about in school and at home.



Use Books to Grow Children

Visit your local library and check out lots of good books to read during the cold winter days. Find family time to read each day. Encourage children who are readers to read books to their younger siblings.

A perfect bedtime choice to offer your child: *"Are you ready to turn out the light, or would you like to read for 10 minutes?"*

Math for the Holidays

Cooking provides an excellent opportunity for your child to see how math applies to real life. If you're doing the cooking, perhaps you could let your child do the measuring—under your guidance of course! Ask such questions as:

*Which is greater—a teaspoon or a tablespoon?
Which is smaller—a cup or a pint?
How many cups are in a pint?
How many tablespoons will it take to fill a cup?
(Estimate first and then measure them. Compare the estimate with the actual measurement.)*

Along with your child, read nutritional labels on cans and boxes in your kitchen and in the grocery store as you shop. This gives children an awareness of **numbers, percentages, and nutritional values**. Ask such questions as:
*How many grams of fiber does it have?
Which cereal has the highest number of fiber grams?
How many grams of sugar does it have?
How many calories are in a serving?
How many servings are in the entire box?
How many calories are fat?*

Let your child plan a meal on a **budget**. Tell them how much they can spend. Have them make out a grocery list, estimate the cost, and shop for the groceries.

Have your child **calculate** the number of days, hours, and for older kids the minutes, and seconds before some planned event.

When you're, challenge your child to spot objects alongside the road that represent different **geometric shapes**. What can they find in the shape of a circle? (sign, picture) ... a rectangle? (home, door, sign, billboard, license tag) ... a triangle? (roof, yield sign, tree) ... a square? ... a cylinder? (bale of hay, oil tanker container) ... a hexagon? (stop sign)

Introduce your child to the basic concept of **fractals** through one of nature's best examples. Look closely at a tree and see the number of times that the basic shape of the tree is replicated in each branch, each limb of the branch, and often in its needles.

Mix Science and Math: A Recipe for Hours of Fun

Here's a simple recipe your child can use to make their own version of Play-Dough. It's **not** to be eaten, but it can provide hours of fun! Talk about what happens as the ingredients interact.

Play Dough

1 cup flour ¼ cup salt
1 cup warm water 1 teaspoon veg. oil
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
Food coloring
Mix all ingredients, adding food coloring last. Stir over medium heat until smooth. Place in plastic bag or airtight container.

Here's a no-bake recipe:

Clay Dough

3 cups flour 3 cups salt
3 tablespoons alum water as needed
Combine three dry ingredients and add water a little bit at the time. Mix well with a spoon until stiff enough to mix with hands. Work with hands until it feels like clay. If too dry, add more water. If too sticky, add equal parts of salt and flour. Store in an airtight container.

Social Studies

Using a daily newspaper, give your kids a map of the US or of the world. Have them hunt for as many states, countries or locations as they can find. They can color in the location as they find a story to represent it. Follow up with questions such as:

How many states/countries/continents did you find? Which are the smallest based on the area of your map? Which are the largest based on your map?

Talk about **current events** with your children. Conversations can stem from TV, newspapers, magazines or your general knowledge. Awareness of current events makes students smarter!

Best of All...

Talk a lot with your child and explore new things—visit a museum, watch educational TV, go to the zoo, walk through your neighborhood, collect leaves, study the stars. Your conversations will help your child acquire new vocabulary, and, most importantly, every new experience will expand their minds!