

13 (Better) Questions to Ask Your Child About School

By Bob Cunningham

When your child comes home on the first few days of school—or throughout the school year—there will be lots of information you want from him or her. Here are some important things to keep in mind when you're talking to your child about school.

- 1 The way you ask the questions matters. If you give your child the opportunity to answer with one word (*yes*, *no*, a name), then you're likely to get a one-word response. Try to ask open-ended questions to keep a conversation going.
- 2 Often kids are not specific, so you have to ask for specific information when you want it.
- 3 Starting with factual questions is a great way to ease into conversation.
- 4 Avoiding emotion-packed words (*fun*, *happy*, *sad*, *mean*) will allow the conversation to go on longer.
- 5 Asking positive questions will give your child a chance to express concerns. Negative questions will stop a conversation.

After-School Conversation Starters

Avoid These Questions	Try These Instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How was school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you have fun at school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the best thing you did at school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who did you sit with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me the names of the four kids who sat closest to you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was your teacher nice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the most interesting thing your teacher said today?• What class rules did your teacher say are important?• What did your teacher say she likes to do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did your teacher go over the daily schedule with the class?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the best thing about your daily schedule?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you have everything you needed for school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was there anything you wish you had at school that you didn't have today?

Avoid These Questions	Try These Instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the kids in your class nice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who did you enjoy talking with the most? • Did anyone have anything fun or interesting to talk about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you get your schedule? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which days look best on your schedule?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your friends in your classes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me two kids you remember from each class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work hard? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the best thing your teacher asked you to do in _____ today?

The most likely times for your child to experience negative social interactions at school are the less structured times, such as recess, lunch and during transitions from activity to activity or room to room. Asking questions specifically about these times will give you the best read on social circumstances.

Avoid These Questions	Try These Instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you play with anyone at recess? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were most kids doing at recess? • What was the best game at recess? • What did you talk about at recess?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was lunch? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who sat near you at lunch? • What were the other kids eating for lunch? • What was the funniest thing someone said at lunch?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you get your locker? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is your locker? • Who has a locker near yours?

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