



Dear Students,

The upper elementary grades are exciting and fun, and you'll learn a lot during these years. You will also find that each year you're ready to take on new challenges and responsibilities.

This book will tell you what you need to do to be successful both in and out of school. If you follow the ten steps in this book, you are sure to have a great year!

Linda O'Brien

In this book, you will find quotes from several fifth grade students. These students have some excellent tips and advice for you!

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What to Expect

Students are usually more successful when they know what to expect. Here are some things you can expect to find in the upper elementary grades.

Harder Classes

You can expect your classes to be more challenging, and you will probably have more homework. Your teachers will also expect you to be able to do more work on your own.

More Teachers and Changing Classes

You will study new subjects, you might have more than one teacher, and you may even change classes.

Clubs, Activities, and After-School Programs

As you get older, you will find that there are more activities and programs for students, both in and out of school.

More Independence and More Responsibility

You will likely have more freedom and more choices in the upper elementary grades. You will also be expected to be more responsible and trustworthy.

“We’re studying some really cool stuff in school now. I just finished a project on volcanoes—I did a report and I made an awesome volcano.” Carlee

Step 1

Know Your School

Now that you're older, you should be aware of how things work at your school.

Student Handbook

Many elementary schools have a student handbook that has important information about their school. A student handbook explains the school rules. It also goes over lots of other things that students need to know, like your school's attendance policies and the dress code.

If your school doesn't have a handbook, you can probably find this information on your school's website.

School Calendar

Your school puts out a calendar so that you and your parents can keep track of important dates, activities, and events.

Your school calendar shows the dates for open houses and conferences. It also shows when your school will be closed for holidays and vacations.



At the beginning of the year, go over the school calendar with your parents. Put all of the important dates and events on your calendar at home.

Website

Your school probably has its own website. This website will tell you what's new and what's going on at your school. It may also have information about your classes and your teachers.



Some school websites have links to classroom web pages, and lots of teachers post assignments and grades online.

Attendance and Tardy Policies

Know what your school's attendance policies are, and what you need to do if you're absent or late.

You are expected to be in school every day, unless you are ill. You're also expected to be on time each day. If you're absent for more than a day or two, try to get some schoolwork to do at home. If your teachers post assignments online, it should be easy to find out what you need to do. If they don't, contact a classmate to find out what you've missed, or have a parent call the office to see if it's possible to get your assignments.

Make up all the work you've missed as soon as you can. You don't want to get behind.

"I try to never miss school. It's just too hard to make the work up." Josh

Code of Conduct / School Rules

In order to have a great place for students to learn, schools need to have rules telling students what they can and can't do. These rules are usually listed in the school's student handbook. *All schools have rules that say no weapons, drugs, violence, smoking, alcohol, or bullying.*

Most students understand the importance of school rules and they follow them. Students who break the rules must accept the consequences.

If you break a rule, a teacher or principal may take away your free time, or you may have to stay after school. Students who do something very bad are sometimes suspended. Students who are suspended aren't allowed to come to school for a certain amount of time.

All students need to work together to make their school a safe place to learn. If another student does something that puts you or someone else in danger, tell a teacher, principal, or counselor right away.

Principals and teachers make rules so their school will run smoothly. But it is the students who make their school a great place to be!

"Most school rules are just common sense." Marissa

"School rules are no big deal. Just follow them." John

Where to Go for Help

Your school is full of caring people. If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, and counselors. You'll also see librarians, tutors, and secretaries. All of these people are there to help you.



If you're having trouble learning something, or if a subject seems too hard, talk to your teacher. Maybe you need some extra help. If you have a problem or need help with anything, be sure to let someone know.

"I was having a lot of trouble with fractions. I asked my teacher for help, and she worked with me after school. Now I understand how to do fractions and I'm getting a good grade in math." Carlos

"There was a boy who was bothering me. I asked one of my teachers how to handle it. She helped me figure out what to do." Hannah

Tell your parents right away if you're having trouble with a subject or a class. Also let them know if there is a problem with a teacher or another student. Your parents love you and will help you with any problem you're having.

Step 2

Be in School Every Day

To do well in school, you must have good attendance!

When you miss school, you miss a lot. You miss lessons, class discussions, homework, quizzes, and tests.



It doesn't matter how good you are about making up your work. You can never make up everything you miss. This is true even if you are out of school for only one day. *You need to be in school every day to get good grades!*

If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed. If you missed a quiz or a test, talk to your teacher to find out how you can make it up.

Teachers are very busy during class time. See each teacher before or after class to find out what you missed. Then do your make-up work as soon as possible.

If you know ahead of time that you're going to be absent, let your teachers know. Ask them if you can get the assignments you will miss.

"I hate to miss school. When you come back you don't know what's going on. I try not to miss school unless I'm really sick." Andrew

Step 3

Know How to Get Good Grades

If you do all of these things, you're sure to get good grades.



Be Organized

- ▶ Use a student planner or an assignment notebook.
- ▶ Have a separate folder for each class.
- ▶ Have phone numbers for classmates so you will have someone to contact if you have a question.
- ▶ Keep your desk and backpack neat.
- ▶ Before you go to bed, get everything organized for the next day.

Manage Your Time Well

- ▶ Use free time in school to start on your homework.
- ▶ After school each day, look at your homework and make a study plan.

Be Successful in Class

- ▶ Be in school, on time, every day.
- ▶ Ask and answer questions in class.
- ▶ Always do your homework.
- ▶ Obey class rules and treat others with respect.

Take Notes and Organize Handouts

- ▶ Pay attention in class.
- ▶ Copy the notes your teacher writes on the board.
- ▶ Have a folder for each subject. Put all handouts and returned papers in the right folders.
- ▶ If you're absent, get copies of the notes and handouts you missed.

Know How to Read a Textbook

- ▶ Before you start to read an assignment, look over the headings and the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ Read the assignment all the way through.
- ▶ When you're done reading, take a few minutes and review what you've read. *Review is the key to learning and remembering anything.*

Study Smart

- ▶ Be sure to take everything you need home with you.
- ▶ Have a good place to study.
- ▶ Organize your study time.
- ▶ Allow more time for homework than you think you'll need.
- ▶ Ask a parent for help if you need it.

"Before I start to do my homework, I figure out what I have to do—and the order I'm going to do it in." Kate

Be a Smart Test-Taker

- ▶ Before you answer any questions, look over the test and make a plan.
- ▶ Don't spend too much time on one question or problem.
- ▶ Mark the questions you want to come back to.
- ▶ Check all of your answers.
- ▶ Use all of the time you're given.

Cheating

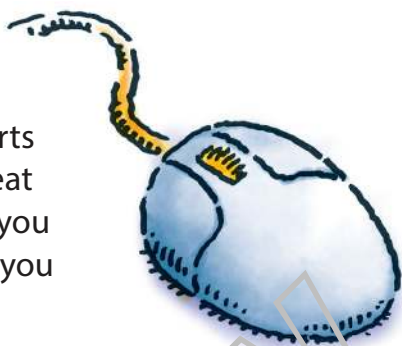
Some students think that it's not a big deal to cheat. But, cheating *is* a big deal and it's *wrong*. If you cheat, you can get into a lot of trouble. Your teacher and your parents will also be disappointed in you.

What Is Cheating?

- ▶ Copying someone else's work
- ▶ Not being honest when grading papers in class
- ▶ Pretending someone else's work is your own
- ▶ Giving someone your paper to copy
- ▶ Not telling your teacher about a grading mistake
- ▶ Copying something word for word, even from the internet

The Internet

In the upper elementary grades, you need to do research for reports and projects. The internet is a great place to gather information, but you must be careful. The information you find online may not be correct.



Only use the internet if you know that you have permission from your teacher and a parent. Then make sure the information you use is correct. If you have a question, ask your teacher or librarian.

At home, you may use the internet to play games and watch videos. You may also use it to keep in touch with your friends. Just be careful whenever you go online.

Here are some internet safety tips.

- ▶ Don't give your name, address, telephone number, or school name to anyone.
- ▶ Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.
- ▶ Don't give your password to anyone.
- ▶ If you come across anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parents.

Never post anything online you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see!

Step 4 Set Goals

It's important for people of all ages to have goals.

What kind of plans and dreams do you have for yourself? Do you dream about being a good student? Playing well in the next game? Going to college? Having a great job?

The best way to help make your dreams come true is to set goals. If you're not in the habit of setting goals for yourself, now is the time to start.

Set Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

Long-term goals take a long time to reach. They might take weeks, months, or even years to achieve.

Short-term goals are goals that you can reach in a short period of time – hours, days, or weeks. Short-term goals can often help you achieve your long-term goals.

Examples of short-term goals:

Get a B on my next math test

Read a chapter of my book tonight

Examples of long-term goals:

Get all As and Bs on my next report card

Go to college and become a lawyer

Set Goals that are Specific, Measurable, and Realistic

Not specific – *I will do better in math.*

Specific – *I will get a B in math this quarter.*

Not measurable – *I won't be so shy in class.*

Measurable – *I will raise my hand at least three times today.*

Not realistic – *Even though I usually get all Cs on my report card, I will get straight As this time.*

Realistic – *I usually get all Cs on my report card. On my next report card, I will get at least two Bs.*



Set Both School and Personal Goals

At the beginning of the grading period, think about your classes. Then figure out what grade you think you can get in each class. These will be your school goals.


At the end of the grading period, congratulate yourself if you were able to meet your goals. If you didn't achieve your goals, try to figure out why. Then set new goals for the next grading period.

Also set one or two personal goals for yourself. For example, maybe you want to be able to play a difficult piece on the piano by the end of the month. Come up with at least one thing you want to accomplish that doesn't involve grades.

Write It Down

Once you've set a goal for yourself, write it down. Then write down what you need to do to reach that goal.

In the example below, Mia set a goal for herself. Then she made a list of the things that she needed to do to reach her goal.



My goal is to have enough money to buy a new bike this summer. To reach my goal, I will:

1. find out where I can get the best price.
2. figure out how much money I need to save.
3. save half my allowance each week.
4. save all of my birthday money.
5. ask Grandma if she has any jobs I can do to earn some money.

Successful people set goals and then work hard to achieve them. Having goals will help you become the person you want to be!

"I'm always setting goals for myself. My new goal is to be able to make 4 out of 10 free throw shots by the beginning of the basketball season." Brad

Step 5 Be Involved

Students who are involved in activities often get better grades.



Some elementary schools have lots of activities for their students. Other schools have only a few activities. If your school has an activity that you're interested in, get involved. If it doesn't, ask your parent(s) to help you find some activities outside of school.

5 Reasons to Get Involved in School Activities

1. Spend time with friends

"My friends and I are in art club. It's really fun." Emily

2. Provide a valuable service

"I became part of the safety patrol. I really like helping the younger kids." Tyler

3. Develop your skills and talents

"I joined the band this year and I am learning how to play the trumpet. I'm not very good yet, but I am getting better, and it's fun." Jasmine

4. Relieve stress

"Playing sports helps me get rid of a lot of stress. And I get to be with my friends." Jorge

5. Have fun

"School activities are the best part of school." Olivia

Get Involved in Activities Out of School

There are lots of interesting activities for students your age. Here are just a few.

- ▶ Recreation centers offer sports programs.
- ▶ Communities have scouting programs.
- ▶ Local community and art centers offer classes in acting, dance, and painting.
- ▶ Churches have youth groups.

Ask a parent to find out what kinds of activities are available in your community.

Develop Some Hobbies

Being involved in group activities and doing things with friends is important, but it's also important to have things that you like to do by yourself. Take time to develop some personal hobbies.

Find something that you love to do, and then do it!

Things You Can Do On Your Own

Read	Draw	Write stories	Start a collection
Hike	Dance	Shoot hoops	Build something
Cook	Fish	Ride a bike	Listen to music
Skate	Sew	Juggle	Take care of a pet

Step 6

Make Good Choices and Decisions

Making good choices and decisions means knowing what to do in difficult situations.

Making Good Choices

Do you realize how many choices you make every day? You choose what snacks to eat, what clothes to wear, and what to do in your free time. These are easy choices. As you get older, the choices you make will become more difficult.

The hardest choices that students have to make often involve their friends. Sometimes students decide to go along with what their friends are doing, even when they know their friends are making bad choices. These students are often sorry later.

When you are with your friends, don't ever do something that doesn't feel right to you. If someone asks you to do something that you don't want to do, just say, "No," or "No, thanks." If that doesn't work, tell your friends that you'll see them later, and then leave.

Be true to yourself. Think about who you are and who you want to be. This will make it easier for you to make good choices and decisions.



The Decision-Making Process

You may find that your parents and teachers are giving you more freedom now. Maybe you're allowed to go more places with your friends. Perhaps you're allowed to stay up later. *With greater freedom comes greater responsibility.* Remember, you are responsible for your actions and for the decisions you make.



Every decision you make has consequences. When you make good decisions, good things happen. When you make poor decisions, bad things can happen. It's important that you learn how to make good decisions.

Decision-Making Steps

When you're faced with a difficult decision, try going through the following steps:

1. Figure out what your choices are.
2. Make a list of the good and bad things about each choice.
3. Make sure that you have all the information you need.
4. Consider the good and bad aspects of each choice, and then make your decision.

Jake's Dilemma

My best friend invited me to go to a movie, but I was saving my money to buy a new computer game. I couldn't decide if I should spend my money on the movie or save my money for the game. So I wrote down the good and bad things about each choice.

Going to the movie – Good things

- 1. I get to spend time with my friend.*
- 2. I really want to see this movie.*

Going to the movie – Bad things

- 1. It costs a lot of money.*
- 2. It's a beautiful day. I hate to spend such a great day in a movie theater.*

Saving money for a new game – Good things

- 1. I almost have enough money to buy my game.*
- 2. Movies last only a couple of hours. I will have my game for a long time.*

Saving money for a new game – Bad things

- 1. I will miss spending time with my friend.*
- 2. I will have to wait to see the movie.*

I looked over the good and bad things about each choice, and I decided to save my money. Instead of going to the movie, I rode my bike to the park. My other friends were there and my best friend met up with us after the movie.

Step 7

Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies

As students get older, sometimes they feel more stressed. Some students get angry more often. A few students even act like bullies.



Dealing with Stress

We all have days when things just don't go right. Maybe you get in trouble at home, then you get a bad grade on a test, and then your teachers give you a ton of homework to do. As these things pile up, you may start to feel stressed out.

Stress affects the way our bodies work. You might feel sick, or your heart might beat faster. Stress can also make it hard to sleep.

If you are feeling worried or stressed, there are things you can do to help you feel better.

When You Feel Stressed...

- ▶ Talk with your family and friends about how you feel. Talking is good because it helps you sort things out.
- ▶ Do things that help you relax – listen to music, play with a pet, read a book, or take a walk.
- ▶ Try to keep a sense of humor.

Dealing with Anger

We all get angry sometimes. But getting angry usually does not help anything. If you ever get so angry that you don't know what to do, try doing one of the following:

- ▶ *Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and count to 10 (or 20 or 30).*
- ▶ *Do something active. Take a walk, shoot baskets, or kick a ball.*
- ▶ *Talk to a friend, teacher, or parent about why you're angry.*

Dealing with Bullies

Being bullied can be scary. Bullies can make kids feel so upset that they don't want to go to school. The best way to deal with a bully is to stay away from him/her.

If you're ever the target of a bully, talk to your friends about what's going on and ask for their help. Also tell a parent, counselor, or teacher what's going on. Don't ever let anyone bully you into silence.

When you tell someone what's happening, you are taking action to protect yourself. You are also making your school a safer place for everyone.

Bystanders are the key to stopping bullies. Bullies want power, and they like having an audience. You and your friends can stop bullies by letting them know that what they are doing is not okay.

Step 8

Get Along with Your Parents

Getting along with your parents will make your life much easier and a lot more fun.

During the next several years, you and your parents will go through different stages. There will probably be times when you disagree. You may want more time to hang out with your friends, or you may want more freedom than your parents want to give you.



You may not always agree with your parents, but if you do these ten things, you and your parents will get along fine.

1. Remember that your parents care about you and want what's best for you.
2. Tell your parents what's happening at school and talk to them about your friends.
3. Bring your friends home to meet your parents.
4. Never be disrespectful to your parents.
5. Try hard in school.
6. Do chores without complaining.

- 7.** Always get your parent's permission before you do something.
- 8.** If you've done something wrong, admit what you have done. Your parents will probably be a lot more understanding if you're honest.
- 9.** If you and your parents disagree, try to understand why they feel the way they do. Then, if you believe that what you want is really okay, try to meet your parents halfway. This example will give you an idea of how this can work.

Nicole wanted to go to her friend Mia's house after school and stay for dinner. Mia lived next door and just got a new puppy. But Nicole's parents said no, and reminded her that she had homework to do.

Nicole did not get angry. She said, "I really don't have that much homework tonight. If I can finish it by 5:30, can I go to Mia's house after dinner? You can even check my homework to make sure that I did a good job. And I promise to be home by 7:30."

If Nicole's parents say OK, then Nicole will need to do exactly what she said she'd do. She will need to finish her homework and be home by 7:30. If her parents still say no, Nicole should not complain. Her parents will be impressed with how mature she is being – and they may be more likely to say yes the next time.

- 10.** Talk to your parents if you have a problem or if you're worried about something. They can help.

Tips for Getting Along with Parents

We asked our student panel for some tips on how to get along with parents. Here are their suggestions.

"Ask your parents to help you study sometimes." Joe

"When you disagree with your parents, try to put yourself in their shoes." Juliana

"Introduce your friends to your parents. Parents feel better when they know who your friends are." Leon

"Ask your parents for permission when you want to go somewhere or do something." Christina

"Talk to your parents about what's going on in your classes and at school." Olivia

"When you disagree, try to explain yourself without getting upset or angry." Antonio

HINT: If you do well in school, your parents are more likely to be understanding about a lot of other things. If you study hard and get good grades, it will pay off in a number of ways!

Step 9

Be a Good Friend



Having friends makes coming to school more interesting and more fun.

It's important to have friends. Friends can make you laugh, and they can make everything you do seem like more fun. They can also help you when you are having trouble with something.

Making friends is easy for some people and hard for others. Here are some tips on how to make friends, and how to be a good friend.

How to Make Friends

- ▶ Smile and be friendly. Talk to kids you don't know.
- ▶ Join clubs that do things you like to do. This will help you meet other kids with the same interests.
- ▶ Accept people for who they are. Be open to having friends who are different from you.

How to Be a Good Friend

- ▶ Be a good listener.
- ▶ Be kind with your words.
- ▶ Be ready to help your friends.

Step 10

Plan and Prepare for Your Future

It is never too early to start planning for your future.

Have you ever thought about what kind of career you'd like to have when you're grown up? Some students dream of becoming teachers, doctors, or lawyers. Other students picture themselves as professional athletes or musicians.

There are hundreds of careers from which to choose. To be successful and happy, you will need to choose a career that's going to be right for you. You can start planning for your future career by thinking about what you enjoy and what you're good at.

Take a look at the seven career areas below. Which areas sound the most interesting to you?

Seven Career Areas

Business – manager, salesperson, business owner

Health Care – nurse, doctor, physical therapist

High Tech/Computers – engineer, computer programmer

The Arts – musician, artist, actor

Education – teacher, principal, professor

Human Services – social worker, police officer

Skilled Trades – auto mechanic, plumber, carpenter

Preparing for a Career

Graduation from high school is still many years away. Even so, it's not too early to start thinking about what you want to do after you graduate.



Most careers require education or training beyond high school—and the better your education, the more career choices you're going to have.

Maybe you already know what you want to do after you graduate. Maybe you have no idea. This is not a decision that you need to make now. But, it's a good idea for you to know what your choices will be. Here is a list of five different ways that you can prepare for a great career.

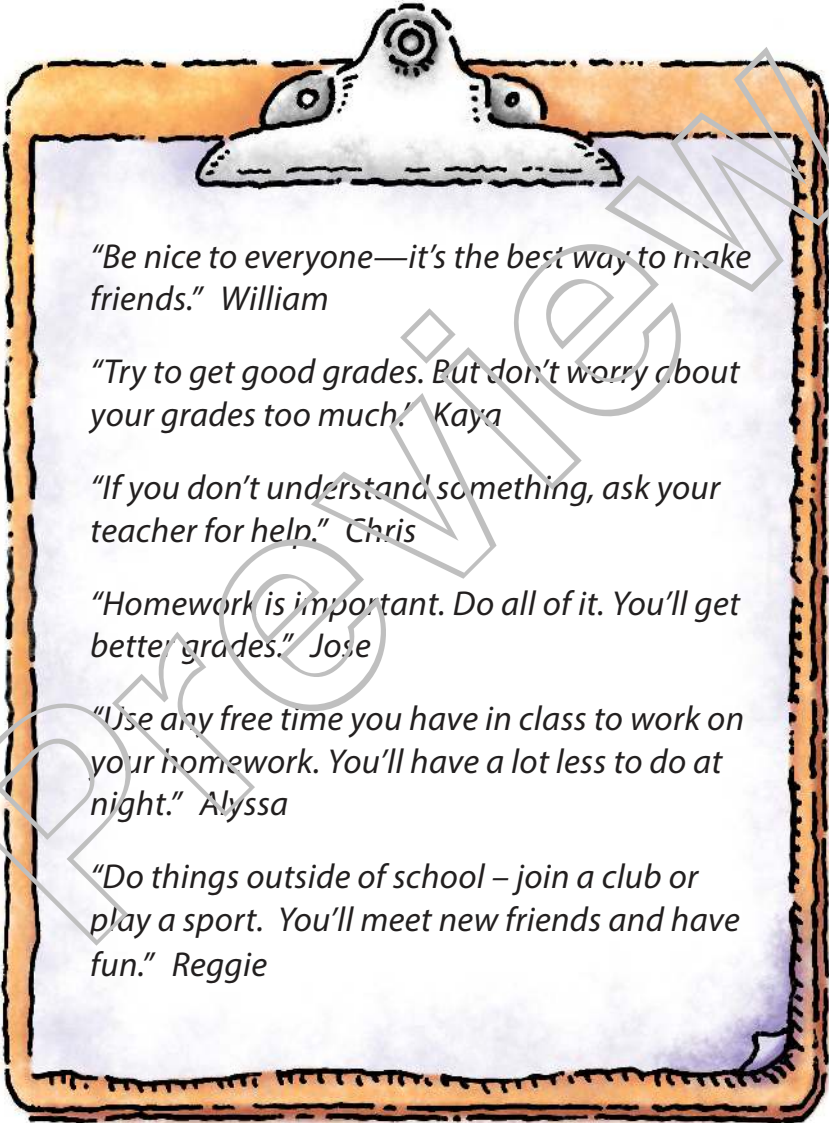
Five Ways to Prepare for a Career

- ▶ High School Career and Technology Program
- ▶ Four-Year College
- ▶ Two-Year College
- ▶ Career or Trade School
- ▶ Military

"I don't know what I want to be when I grow up, but I really like science—and I know that I want to go to college. Maybe I will be a doctor or a nurse, or maybe a scientist." Sophia

Tips for Students

We asked our student panel for their best tips and advice. Here is what they said.



"Be nice to everyone—it's the best way to make friends." William

"Try to get good grades. But don't worry about your grades too much." Kaya

"If you don't understand something, ask your teacher for help." Chris

"Homework is important. Do all of it. You'll get better grades." Jose

"Use any free time you have in class to work on your homework. You'll have a lot less to do at night." Alyssa

"Do things outside of school – join a club or play a sport. You'll meet new friends and have fun." Reggie

Tips for Parents

The upper elementary grades are a time of change. Most students this age go through several stages and lots of ups and downs.

The tips below will help you guide and advise your child during these important years.



- 1.** Make sure your child is in school, on time, every day.
- 2.** Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener.
- 3.** Attend open houses and parent conferences. Regularly check your school's website for information and updates.
- 4.** Write down the dates that interim/midterm reports and report cards come out. If you don't see a report card, call the school and request a copy.
- 5.** Realize that it's your child's responsibility to follow school rules, get homework done, and prepare for tests.
- 6.** Make sure your child knows that you're always available to help in any way you can.
- 7.** Look for opportunities to praise good grades and extra effort.

With your support and guidance, your child is sure to find success, not only in elementary school, but in middle school and beyond!

Preview