

BACK TO SCHOOL

How was your day?

It's that time of year again when children have to say goodbye to the glorious summer holidays and knuckle down once again to their school work.

Younger children may still find it hard returning to school after so long away, and for those just starting out there is a lot to get used to in the new and, possibly, startling big world.

No matter what their age though, for your own peace of mind, you would love them to tell you every detail of their day – so you know it's alright, they don't have any problems and that they are happy in their school. But what happens when you ask questions and all you receive for a reply is a few short words that don't tell you what's really going on?

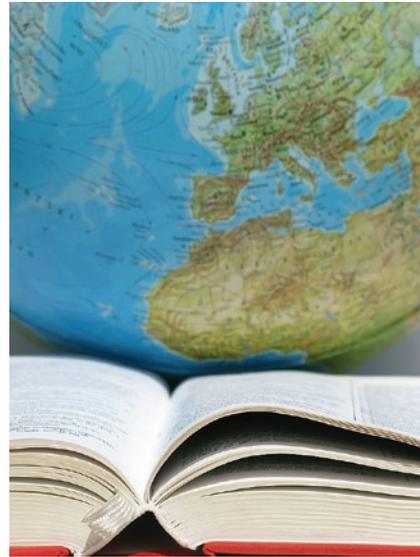
Queries such as "How was your day?" or "What did you do today?" will often garner the answer "It was ok", "I can't remember" or even "Nothing" it can be very frustrating.

However, often this situation has less to do with any reticence on your child's part than with our own lack of skills. Usually, your children aren't trying to be awkward; we simply aren't asking the right questions.

If inquiries are too vague your child may not know where to start; what you need to do is



↑ Try to adapt question time to their needs: if they are sitting quietly wait until they are obviously feeling chatty



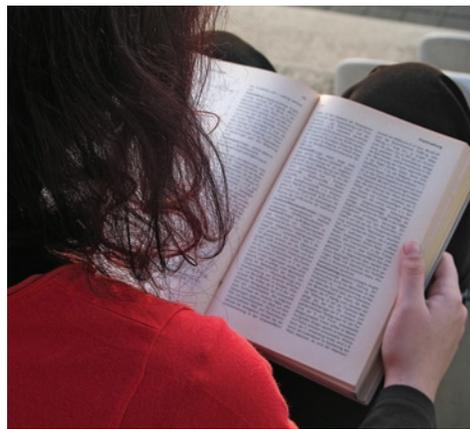
↑ School is a whole different world for them



↑ Try to keep up with developments in your child's friends' lives too



↑ A large part of their education comes from the friendships they build



↑ Try to ask specific questions about their work

offer specific questions. Try asking, "What did Mrs Brown say about your story/music

project/show and tell?" These types of questions are not only easier to answer but they also

demonstrate that you are taking a real interest: enough to remember they had finished a

project and that today was the day it was due in.

Don't always concentrate on their academic work either. Include questions such as "What food did you enjoy today?" "Who did have you lunch with?" and "What did you do at break time?"

Ask about their friends as well and encourage children to talk through any fears or worries they may have by saying things like, "Is there anything you don't like" and "How did

make you feel?" Never discount any worry as being ridiculous or unimportant – take every problem your child

tells you about seriously, but don't make a big issue out of anything, and always present a positive view - children pick up on their parents' feelings as much as on their words.

No matter what they are talking about, listen carefully to their answers and make an effort to remember details so you can store more questions for another day.

Picking the right moment to chat is also important. Some children need to do something active before they can settle down to conversation, whilst others are tired when they finish school and don't feel like talking until they've had a rest. It can also be easier to chat whilst enjoying a shared activity or at dinner-time, so everyone has something else to concentrate on as well: your child may feel less pressured. It may also depend greatly on the kind of day they have had; try to work around when they are obviously in a chatty mood.

Children won't want to give you a rundown of their whole day, but if you think carefully about what you're asking, remember details, and really show you are listening to them, you will soon find that conversation becomes easier.

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