



## Make Every Day Count: Boost School Attendance

**T**o stay on track in school, students need to be present every day. Missing 18 or more days of school in a year puts a child's high school graduation at risk, according to BoostUp.org, a national dropout prevention campaign. Being absent for just two days every month of the school year can put a child behind academically.

Students with regular attendance are more likely to read well by third grade and score higher on tests. They also tend to be more engaged in school and feel better about themselves.

Put your child on the path to success with these attendance strategies.

**Make school a priority.** Every absence (excused or not), can impact a child's academic achievement. Talk to your child about how important their education is. Make daily routines for homework and waking up on time for school.

Maintain communication with teachers and keep an eye on your child's academic progress. If your child seems disconnected from school or is prone to skipping class, try signing him or her up for an after-school activity. A report by the University of Minnesota found that students in an after-school program attended 18 more days of school and missed nine fewer than their peers.

**Make a plan.** If your schedule or transportation situation makes getting your child to school a challenge, ask for assistance. Make a carpool or transportation plan with other parents or family members, or ask your school principal for community programs or school initiatives that may help.

**Report in.** Know your school's attendance policies. If an absence or early dismissal is unavoidable, contact your school. If your family's religious observances fall on school days, let teachers know early in the year which days your child will miss.

**Carefully weigh sick days.** If your child is sick, talk with your health care provider to determine whether they should stay home from school. If the doctor or nurse recommends that your child stay home, find out exactly how long and on what conditions he or she can return to class (for example, after 24 hours of antibiotics).

Before keeping your children home, make sure they aren't faking symptoms. Regularly feigning sickness may be a sign that your child is anxious about facing a challenge at school, such as bullying.



**Schedule wisely.** Know your school's calendar, and arrange doctor and dentist appointments after school, on weekends, or during holiday breaks, if possible. Resist the urge to schedule vacations when students will miss school. This gives students the impression that school is not a priority.

**Help students complete assignments.** When your child has to miss school, make arrangements with teachers

to pick up a packet of make-up work. Ensure that your child follows through, and be available to explain concepts or monitor their work. If your child's absence will be lengthy (for surgery, for instance), alert teachers as soon as you know and pick up assignments as the days go on.

### Web Resources

**Get Schooled** has a number of attendance-related games and tools, including the Attendance Counts calculator and celebrity wake-up calls for students.  
<https://getschooled.com/>

The Children's Hospital of Colorado's **How Sick is Too Sick? guide** can help families decide which symptoms should keep students at home.  
<http://bit.ly/1B6ORIA>

**Attendance Works** offers research, webinars, and handouts designed with elementary and middle-level parents in mind.  
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/>