

Understanding School Attendance: A key to academic success

Children who go to school often are more likely to do well in school. Students who attend school every day are nine times more likely to graduate high school. They are also six times more likely to achieve reading success by the third grade. For this reason, children are expected to attend school as much as possible. In Ohio, schools keep a record of the number of hours that children attend school.

Children who attend school regularly:

- Get better grades. Learn English faster.
- Feel better about themselves. Feel better about school.
- Have better relationships with their classmates and teachers.

What should you do when your child needs to miss school?

Contact the school to report the absence. You can call the school office to let them know your child is going to miss school.

This is important. State law requires schools to contact families of absent students within two hours of the start of the school day. Most schools use automated calls to contact parents if a student does not have an excused absence. Most schools have a separate attendance phone number to report an absence.

We have this law so families and the school know where children are and that they are safe.

When your child returns to school give the school a note explaining why your child was absent. For an excused absence, make sure to provide any documents or materials that the school asks for. A doctor's note is a common example. Sometimes a school will not count an absence as excused. This happens when families do not provide a letter or other materials required by the school.

You may ask for a note. Ask, “May I please have a note for my child to give to the school to excuse their absence.”

Check with your child’s teachers. See if there are any assignments or materials your child should review. Especially if your child is missing many days of school.

“What can my child do to make up the lessons and assignments they missed?”

What is good attendance?

Students should attend school as much as possible. Being late to school often can negatively affect your child’s learning just as much as missing too many days of school does. When students miss school, they miss out on learning. They can quickly fall behind their classmates. Schools care about the success of students. They will take extra steps to support students who need help getting to school.

There are two types of absences: excused and unexcused. The kind of absence will vary from school to school, so it's important to know the specific rules at your own school. For example, if you need to attend a legal appointment or take your child to the doctor, the absence could be considered excused. To get an excused absence for your child, you might need to show a letter from the doctor, lawyer, or someone who can verify the reason for your absence. This way, the school will understand that the absence was necessary, and it won't count against your child's attendance record.

What happens when students miss too much school?

When children miss a lot of school, they miss much of their learning time and can fall behind quickly. This is why schools monitor each student’s attendance.

What may the school do:

- Contact your family to let you know about the absence and make sure your child is safe.
- Send a letter home. This letter should be sent in the language you prefer to use. When you enrolled your child in school, they should have asked about the language you prefer to use. If the language you prefer changes you can ask the school to update or change it.

- Have someone go to your home to make sure your child is safe.
- Contact your family to create a plan to make sure your child attends school regularly.
- Ask about what supports your family needs.
- Provide services to help your child attend school everyday.

What can my family do:

You may call the school to see what options there are. You can speak with the attendance officer, principal, or any school staff member. You may share why your child is missing school. Often, the school can help families like yours to get your child to school on time every day.

Questions You Can Ask

- What should I do if my child misses school?
- What should I do if my child needs to miss school for a cultural or religious holiday? What can I do if I do not have a way to bring my child to school?
- What can I do if I cannot pick up my child from school?
- My child refuses to go to school and does not want to tell me why. What do I do? Who can I ask for help? I received a letter in the mail about my child's attendance. Is there someone I can talk to about this?

Tips for Helping Your Child Have Good Attendance

- **Try to understand why your child does not want to go to school.** Sometimes your child may not want to go to school. When this happens, focus on understanding how your child is feeling and why they do not want to go to school. Make sure to address their issues or concerns.
- **If your child often refuses to go to school and cannot tell you why, schedule an appointment with the teacher or school counselor.** They may be able to help you figure out why your child does not want to go to school.
- **Reduce the time your child misses school for medical appointments or illness.** When you can, schedule appointments outside the school day or during

breaks. Only keep your child at home when they are really sick or if they have a contagious illness. See this [sample note](#) you can use to report an absence to your child's school.

- ❑ **Help your child stay healthy so they can avoid getting sick and missing school.** One way they can stay healthy is to make sure that your child eats a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables and has opportunities to exercise every day through a sports team or playtime outside.
- ❑ **Schedule family events around your child's school schedule.** Plan family trips and celebrations during school vacations or on weekends.
- ❑ **Talk to your child's teacher or the school as soon as possible.** It is important to let the teacher or school know when there are family emergencies or unexpected trips. *The teacher will help you decide if your child can work ahead or if your child can take work that they can complete while they are away from school.*
- ❑ **Plan ahead.** Help your child prepare for school by picking out the clothes or items they will need at school the next day each night. Put out anything else they will need the next day where you or your child can easily find it.
- ❑ **Make sure your child gets enough sleep.** Make sure that your child gets enough sleep, about 8 to 12 hours. Getting enough sleep helps children get up on time and feel rested and prepared the next day. Your child should relax before bedtime by doing something quiet, like reading instead of watching television or using a cellphone!
- ❑ **Ask for an interpreter.** When working with the school, let the school know if you would like to have an interpreter or talk with someone who understands your language and culture. You can also ask to have handouts or information sent from the school translated to your preferred language.

Learn more about helping your child have good attendance on [Colorin Colorado's School Attendance page](#).

Sample Note to Send to School

Here is an example of a letter or message to send the school when your child misses school. You can use this to write a letter by hand or use it to send a text message or email to your child's teachers or school. All you need to do is add your information.

Dear {write the name of the school staff member},

Please excuse my child {write your child's name} for missing school on {write the date your child missed school} because {write the reason your child missed school}. You can contact me at {write your phone number, email, or the best way the school can contact you} if you need more information from me.

Thank you,

{Sign your name here}



Additional Resources

- You can learn more from the Attendance section of the NCELA Family Toolkit when you select Chapter 2. It is available in four languages (English, Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish). <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/family-toolkit>
- The Colorin Colorado School Attendance Key Success page provides tips on attendance. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/school-attendance-key-success>
- Attendance Works offers handouts about attendance at different grade levels that are available in multiple languages. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families>
- Attendance Works also provides tips for families when deciding if your child is sick and needs to stay home from school. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families>

- Access attendance tips for families on the Albuquerque public schools website.
<https://www.aps.edu/news/archives/news-from-2021-2022/attendance-tips-for-families>

These resources aim to bolster academic, student wellness, and college and career outcomes for Ohio's multilingual learners. Resources were created through a collaborative effort between the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce and The Ohio State University's Center on Education and Training for Employment along with a dedicated group of family advocates, community leaders, school district personnel, and teachers.