

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's No 1 parenting educator



Making the most of your parent-teacher interview

It makes sense for you as a parent to be prepared and ready to make the most of the brief time you have with teachers.

Parent-teacher interviews provide a great opportunity for you as a parent to find out how your child is progressing at school.

Many parent-teacher interviews are tightly scheduled and can seem a little rushed. Teachers are generally highly organised so they can make the most of the time you have together.

It makes sense also for you as a parent to be prepared and ready to make the most of the brief time you have with teachers.

Here are some guidelines for to make the most of their interviews:

- 1. Prepare well.** Before the interview, list any questions that you want to raise. Keep questions short and to the point.
- 2. Attend with a partner or friend** particularly if you are nervous or unsure. It is easy to miss a point and often difficult to relay information to a partner.
- 3. Give the teacher a chance** to make an assessment of your child's progress. This may seem obvious but some interviews never get off the ground because enthusiastic parents take over.
- 4. Take notes and clarify information that you don't understand.** "What do you mean by 'he needs to spend more time reading'...?" Make sure you have a good understanding of the messages your child's teacher is giving.
- 5. Be prepared to give an assessment of your child's performance.** You may be asked how you think your child is performing so give an honest, but realistic assessment.
- 6. Ask how you can help your child if there are any areas that need to be strengthened.** No doubt your child's teacher will have some strategies for you to assist your child, so make sure you have a clear understanding before you leave.

If there are unresolved issues or you wish to discuss your child's difficulties in greater detail, consider asking for another interview. This is being respectful of the teacher's time and of those parents who are to follow.

Once the interview is over consider how you will discuss it with your child.

- Avoid giving generalisations or simplistic appraisals such as: *"The teacher says you are a good girl."*
- Discuss areas that need work in positive terms. Talk about strengths or successes first before discussing areas that may need more work.
- A clear message such as, *"We talked about your reading and the teacher suggested that we should try..."* is far more helpful.
- Involve your child in discussing any plans for improvement. Avoid making big plans for your child to improve in a subject area without consulting him or her. By involving children and taking notice of their ideas plans are more likely to be successful.



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