

The Guide to 3rd Grade

Your child has mastered the fundamentals in 1st grade and 2nd grade, and is now ready to thrive through 3rd grade! But it's not just another year: This grade is a very important time in your child's education, because it's when students transition from what are often known as the "lower grades" to the "upper grades." It is a crucial period in students' learning as they become more independent and mature learners.

In 3rd grade, students progress from practicing basic skills to mastering them, and move on to develop more complex skills. For instance, your third grader will become a savvier reader, writer, mathematician, and thinker this year, digging deeper into topics and analyzing what she learns.

The 3rd grade classroom itself likely won't seem that different: It is structured like most elementary school classrooms, with desks or tables for the students and usually an area for lessons and class meetings. As with previous grades, there are often also areas dedicated to different subjects of learning. For instance, there may be a spot for math tools and supplies, plus a class library dedicated to reading. However, this year, technology becomes an even more important part of the classroom as students use it for writing and research.

Reading in 3rd Grade

After mastering literacy skills in earlier grades, 3rd graders become better and more independent readers. Third grade reading focuses on teaching kids how to think and talk about what they read in deeper and more detailed ways. Students read longer texts, and most read fictional chapter books.

Many reading lessons in 3rd grade are dedicated to writing and talking about the meanings, lessons, and important ideas in texts. Third graders are encouraged to develop their own points of view about books they read, and to discuss their ideas about a text or characters. Series books are important in 3rd grade, because they allow students to make connections between different books and talk about how certain characters develop. As 3rd graders explore a greater range of books and longer texts, they become more fluent readers and learn to read, define, and pronounce complex words.

To build reading skills, your 3rd grader:

- Reads multi-syllable and grade-appropriate, irregularly spelled words (ask your child's teacher for a list of these words).
- Reads grade-level text with appropriate pace, accuracy, expression, and understanding.
- Self-corrects mistakes and re-reads when necessary.
- Talks about and answers questions about a text using specific examples from the text and connects different parts of a text.
- Reads a variety of texts including, fiction, non-fiction, fables, and poetry, and understands and talks about their main ideas and lessons.

- Begins to understand the difference between literal and non-literal text such as metaphors and analogies.
- Uses the text and context to determine the meaning of words.
- Is able to express his own point of view about characters or a text.
- Makes comparisons between books written by the same author and books in series that are about the same characters

Bonus Reading Activities

Get Serious About Series: Find a series (like one of those listed above!) that interests your child and begin to read it together. You can read to your child, your child can read to you, or he can read a chapter independently. You can even interview each other as you read — ask about main ideas, events, and thoughts you each have about the books and characters.

Look It Up: When your child encounters a word she doesn't know the meaning of, look up the meaning together. Use a grade-appropriate tool like the [Scholastic Children's Dictionary](#) — or you can even keep your own family dictionary, recording words and their definitions. Use the word yourself, or encourage your child to use that word in a sentence sometime during the day.

Learn About an Author: As your child develops favorite authors, look online for that author's website. He can email or write a letter to the author (under your supervision), or the author may even be at a book signing or other events in your neighborhood that your family can attend.

Writing in 3rd Grade

Third graders continue to practice writing the pieces they learned to do in 2nd grade, but now also write longer ones with more detail. What's more, 3rd graders learn increasingly sophisticated language, using phrases and terms to provide examples and make connections within their writing.

More time is spent on planning, revising, and editing texts in 3rd grade — and as a result, your child learns the “writing process” authors go through. Students may spend a long period of time (say, a few weeks) working on one piece. They also practice writing pieces in shorter periods of time in class and through homework. Third graders continue to use and become comfortable with technology as they employ computers for writing pieces and doing research.

To build writing skills, your 3rd grader:

- Writes a variety types of texts including:
 - *Opinion Pieces*: Students introduce their opinions, note the reasons for those opinions, and provide a conclusion.
 - *Narrative Pieces*: Students write about an event, using descriptive details, feelings, and proper order — and ultimately provide a conclusion.
 - *Informative/Explanatory Pieces*: Students introduce a topic and use facts, definitions, and, if helpful, illustrations to further explain the topic, eventually leading to a conclusion.
- Uses terms such as: *because*, *since*, *for example*, *also*, *another*, and *but* to elaborate on and make connections in her writing.
- Plans, revises, and edits her writing, going through the same process that most writers do.

- Uses digital tools (under the guidance of the teacher) to publish her writing and interact and communicate with others.
- Begins to take notes and do research for short research projects.
- Spends various amounts of time writing a piece, ranging from a short period of time (such as 30 minutes) to working on one piece over the course of a few weeks.

Bonus Writing Activities

Write About Your Lives: When your family experiences an enjoyable or important moment, you and your child can write about it together in a narrative piece. Describe the events that occurred using details and emotion, then send the piece to family members or friends to share the event and the writing.

Get Technical: Help your child use a computer to research a topic or communicate with friends and family. Your third grader can also use the computer to write her own pieces or pieces you write together.

Learn How to Do Something New: Pick something fun you and your child want to learn how to do, like drawing cartoons. Research the topic online or in a book together and create an informative piece, explaining the subject. You can then do the project yourselves or teach another family member or friend using the piece you and your child wrote.

Make Your Own Magazine: Read magazines for children, such as *Scholastic News*, to familiarize your child with the format of magazines. Then work together

to create your own magazine about your family, topics of interest, or anything you'd like!

Math in 3rd Grade

Third grade is a very important year for students to flex their math muscles as they dive into multiplication and division. Specifically, students use math tools such as number rods (units of blocks that represent a certain number), base blocks, and tiles or marbles. This helps them to understand the concepts behind multiplication and division as they combine and divide different groups of objects. As a result, students don't just memorize multiplication tables, but also understand what it *means* to multiply.

Third graders also practice explaining these concepts by showing how they solved a problem, both out loud and through writing, and begin to study fractions.

To build math skills, your 3rd grader:

- Multiplies and divides numbers up to 100 and understands the relationship between multiplication and division.
- Understands that $3 \times 5 = 15$ and $5 \times 3 = 15$ (this is the commutative property of multiplication).
- Begins to memorize the product of one-digit numbers so that he knows them all by the end of 3rd grade.
- Solves word problems that require two steps and more than one mathematical action. For example: If Scott has 9 cupcakes and 12 candies, how many cupcakes and pieces of candy can he give to 3 people so that each person has the same number?

- Rounds numbers to the nearest tens or hundreds.
- Adds numbers up to 1,000.
- Understands and creates fractions and uses number lines to represent and compare different fractions.
- Solves problems involving time and measurement.
- Creates and uses graphs to represent data and answer questions.
- Learns about shapes (and specifically quadrilaterals) and their features.
- Learns about and calculates the area of an object using multiplication and addition

Bonus Math Activities

- **Create a Multiplication Collage:** Have your child look through magazines and newspapers to find around 20 pictures of one type of subject (for example, animals with four legs or red cars). Then help your child practice his math skills by asking him to group the objects to solve a multiplication problem. He can use the collage to explain how he solved the problem.
- **Take a Poll:** Ask family members a question and create a graph of the answers using numbers and pictures. Ask your child questions about the different “data” you collected and create a graph based on it. Your child can then report the findings to your family like a news reporter.
- **Cook with Fractions:** Make foods such as parfaits, sandwiches, or pizzas using fractions. For example, ask your child to help you make a pizza, and ask that $\frac{1}{4}$ of it be covered in a specific topping. Or when you’re serving food such as pizza or a pie, your child can help you slice it into parts and serve it.

- **Time It:** Toward the middle and end of the school year, when your child has become more familiar with multiplication, time how long it takes him to do multiplication tables by heart one number at a time. For example, work on 2, then 3, then 4. Track his progress, encouraging him to break previous records
- addition (specifically by multiplying the lengths of the sides of an object).

Taken from *The Guide to Third Grade* by Shira Ackerman and Kelsey Kloss