



## Are You a Helicopter Parent?

Find out whether you tend to go over the top or fly under the radar.

**YOU'VE HEARD THE TERM: HELICOPTER** parents are those moms and dads who hover low over their children, ready to swoop in for a rescue whenever the going gets tough. But kids learn best when they're allowed to try things on their own, even if it means occasionally failing.

To see where you fly on the helicopter spectrum—too low, just right, or totally off course—answer these questions.

### 1. The teacher calls to tell me my child has been disruptive in class. I:

- a. Tell the teacher she must have it all wrong. My child is an angel.
- b. Ask the teacher for insight into what might be causing the behavior. When I get off the phone, I talk with my child about it. Then I make an appointment with the guidance counselor to talk about next steps.
- c. Tell my child to just behave, for goodness' sake! How hard could it be?

### 2. When my child brings home a poor grade, I:

- a. Run directly to the phone to call the teacher. When she doesn't answer, I call the principal.
- b. Yell and scream at my child and tell her that if she doesn't bring up her grade, she'll be grounded.
- c. Talk with my child about the grade and contact the teacher to discuss ways we can help my child improve her academic performance.

### 3. My child forgot his math book at school again. I:

- a. Sigh and drive him to school to get it. What choice do I have? If I don't, he'll get a zero for not turning in his homework assignment.
- b. Let him deal with the consequences and remind him that the last time this happened, I told him I wouldn't drive him to get the book if he left it behind again.
- c. Tell him he's hopeless and will probably end up failing the class.

### 4. My 2nd grader has to make a diorama featuring a dinosaur for her science project. I:

- a. Find her an empty shoebox, but that's it. After all, it's her project, not mine.
- b. Let her play outside while I sculpt the dinosaurs and paint the background scenery. What was the teacher thinking, assigning such a hard project to a bunch of 7-year-olds?
- c. Help my child read over the instructions from the teacher, take her to the library and the crafts store for resources and materials, help her get organized, and provide technical support.

### 5. At parent-teacher conferences, I:

- a. Usually don't bother going. They never tell me anything I don't already know.
- b. Prepare a list of questions ahead of time to make the best use of my time with the teacher.
- c. Book the last appointment of the day so I can take as much time as I want.

### 6. I work full time and am unable to volunteer at school during the day. I:

- a. Take a few personal days each year so I can attend special school events.
- b. Go to as many PTO meetings as possible so I can stay abreast of what's happening at the school and find volunteer opportunities that don't require daytime availability.
- c. Volunteer to put together the classroom newsletter because I can do it at night and it's a way to stay up to date on what's happening in the classroom.

## You Don't Have To Hover

Letting go can be hard, but in the long run it will build your child's self-confidence. For more, read "Better Grades—You Can Help!" on [SchoolFamily.com](http://SchoolFamily.com).

UPPERCUT IMAGES

SIRI STAFFORD



## Altitude Check

**1. Answer: B.** When a child is disruptive in class, it could be a sign that she is having difficulties or needs extra attention. Working with your child's teacher, your child, and the school guidance counselor is the best way to get to the root of the behavior so you can look for ways to address it.

**2. Answer: C.** It's rarely a good idea to go over the teacher's head and call the principal—especially for something like a poor mark. Instead, work together with your child and the teacher on specific ways to bring up the grade, whether that means receiving extra help after school or instituting a stricter homework and study schedule.

**3. Answer: B.** It's one of the hardest things a parent can do, but children—and adults, for that matter—must learn to accept the negative consequences of their actions. Forgetting something at school is an honest mistake. But it shouldn't happen regularly. Getting a zero on a homework assignment should make a big enough impression that your child will get in the habit of double-checking that he has everything he needs before leaving school.

**4. Answer: C.** At this age, most children love to use what they've learned in school to create a project all on their own. But most need help getting organized. As a parent, you can make sure your child has the materials she needs and walk her through the steps of creating a project. Then step aside and watch the results take shape!

**5. Answer: B.** Teachers often schedule back-to-back conferences with parents, making long conversations impossible. That's why it's a good idea to come prepared with questions—you'll be sure not to forget anything important that you want to discuss.

**6. Answer: A, B, C.** There are always ways to stay connected to your child's school. Taking personal days to attend school events, finding ways to help out during non-working hours, and checking in on PTO meetings are just some of the ways you can become involved.

**How did you do?** If you answered correctly in most instances, congratulations! You're flying your helicopter at just the right altitude. Keep it up!