

10 Things Kids Hate About School (and 10 They Love)

School-age kids report on what they adore and abhor about school

What is it about school that stirs up such passions in our kids? We asked an informal panel of school-agers across the country what they adore and abhor about school. Not surprisingly, many say recess and gym light up their school day. But others just love learning about everything — from bugs to boats. Here are kids' report cards.

10 WORST THINGS

1. Homework hassles

Not surprisingly, homework tops most kids' hate lists. "I have a T-shirt that says, 'Home and work are two words that should never be together,'" says 11-year-old Alex Jones* from Guelph, Ont. "When you're home, you should be doing home stuff!" agrees 10-year-old Tristan Mills, who also lives in Guelph. Older kids juggling multiple subjects feel especially overwhelmed. "I don't like when every teacher gives you homework and projects and tests...and you spend all day doing work because you have these deadlines all at once," complains one grade-nine student.

2. Too-simple subjects

Some students crave more challenging work. "Music could be more advanced," suggests a grade-five future maestro from Nanaimo, BC. "We learn the notes go from A to G, when most of us already know that."

3. Frosty recess

Escaping class to play outside is not always blissful. "If it's really frozen and cold out, you're not [supposed] to go back in," says nine-year-old Owen McGreal from Hamilton. One grade-seven student says he hates mingling at recess because "there are really annoying people who find it fun to put other people down."

4. Wearying words

Ditch school jargon, kids advise. Nine-year-old Olivia Mater of Guelph, Ont., doesn't like the "fancy words some teachers use, like 'nutrition break' and 'dismissal routine.'"

5. Lunch-break blues

Lunch feels like a dine and dash, especially for sociable grade-seven and -eight students. Alannah Clarke, a 14-year-old from Pugwash, NS, yearns for more than 37 minutes. Other kids loathe their lunchtime venue. "I can't stand sitting on the gym floor to eat lunch," says Graham Mater, 13, of Guelph, Ont.

6. Numbing numbers

No secret some kids would like to subtract math from their daily routine — not always for the reason you may think. "I hate math because my hands get sore after all that counting on my fingers," explains a seven-year-old from the Saskatoon area.

7. Excruciating silence

It's hard to zip your lip in a room full of friends. "Silent reading gives me a headache because everyone has to whisper during that time — like 'What do you want to do at recess?'" says six-year-old Noah Viitala from King City, Ont.

8. Toilet trauma

Sharing school facilities with the opposite sex — as some kindergartners do — can be challenging for little ones. Kirsten, a fastidious five-year-old from Newmarket, Ont., hates "when the boys leave the seat up on the toilet, and they sometimes pee on the floor."

9. Wheely boring busing

As nine-year-old Katelynn Wynen knows, heading to school by bus is a drag. "You don't have much to do except talk, stare out the window and maybe read," says the Eden Mills, Ont., student.

10. All work, no play

Bottom line: Kids just want to have fun. "I'd rather stay home and watch *Arthur* and *Princess Diaries* and *Ella Enchanted* all day," says one seven-year-old. Spencer Johnne from Mississauga, Ont., who is plugging away in grade one, is wearied by his workload. "(I hate) all the work. Because I just want to play."

10 BEST THINGS

1. Terrific teachers

Thirteen-year-old Graham Mater loves when his favourite teacher shares personal experiences. "Time limits don't seem to matter, and he never cuts off a discussion." Younger kids have different criteria for teacher excellence. "I love all the candy they give us and (my teacher) sings all the time!" says Tyler Bradshaw* of Ajax, Ont.

2. Extracurricular excitement

Choosing from a varied smorgasbord of sports and clubs delights many students. "[I like] the wide variety of sports and extracurricular activities," says Alannah Clarke. Participating in basketball, soccer, track and field and the "hospitality committee" jazzed up her grade-eight year.

3. Getting out and about

Day tripping thrills most kids — whether it's to a science centre, conservation area or jazz concert. And extended adventures, such as five whirlwind days in Ottawa or Quebec City, help students and teachers bond. As 13-year-old Nicole Shaw* from Guelph, Ont., says: "I like getting to know the teachers outside the school setting because you can find out what they're really like."

4. Peer pleasure

Socializing — that all-important school perk, especially for preteens and teens — is even better when classmates are diverse. "I think it's pretty cool to meet kids from other cultures at school," says 10-year-old Keely Sifton of Nanaimo, BC. "I have friends from South Korea, India and Denmark." Also, many kids enjoy being reading buddies, or helping younger students conquer tricky snowsuits, lunch containers and shoelaces.

5. Piqued curiosity

Some classroom sessions are unforgettable. One five-year-old "just cannot stop talking about how a chrysalis turns into a butterfly." Plus hands-on learning is always a hit: A science class involving a baking-soda-and-vinegar-powered toy car mesmerized one 10-year-old.

6. The pause that refreshes

For many kids, nothing is more beloved than recess. "I like recess because we don't work during that time," says 10-year-old Maxime Forcier of L'Île-Bizard, Que. Instead, they explore outdoor playground equipment, chat and play games like Grounder. To play: "You spin, chase and tag kids," explains one seven-year-old.

7. Creative classes

Despite the time some projects may take, many kids are proud of their finished creations. King City, Ont., grade-one graduate Noah Bishop* relished researching and presenting his findings about lobsters. Aspiring authors and artists are thrilled to launch their books and artwork at school. "I love Published Stories, where we get to publish the best of our journal writing," says a thoughtful grade-three student.

8. A moving experience

Gym class is the perfect antidote to carpet sitting and desk work. Noah Viitala loves gym games like Pluck the Chicken. Team bowling with mini-pylons is a winner for Alex Jones. Other junior athletes take sport seriously. "You get to learn other strategies to help you run, like breathing patterns and pacing yourself," explains a grade-five phys. ed fan.

9. Super celebrations

Sometimes, kids just want to party like it's their birthday! "The best thing about school is all the parties we have on special days, because I get to play games and eat lots of snacks," enthuses Hayden McGreal, who whoops it up in grade one in Hamilton.

10. Well-rounded routine

Six-year-old Catherine Johnne of Mississauga, Ont., succinctly sums up the school experience: "You do work, you do recess, and you do some important stuff. You do drawings and write, and it makes your brain learn a lot. That's what I like about school."

***Names changed by request.**

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