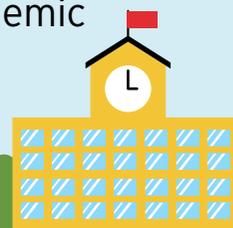


# Why is my child avoiding school?

It is not uncommon for children to display school-resistant behaviors at some point in their academic lives, but when temporary reluctance turns into continual avoidance or refusal to attend school altogether, the child may be facing more serious behavioral challenges.



If not addressed, long-term avoidance or refusal to attend school can lead to serious consequences such as family conflict and problems with academic success in adulthood.



## Signs of avoidance

If your child regularly does the following, he/she may be avoiding school:

- Begs to stay home
- Asks to be home schooled
- Visits the school nurse with vague complaints
- Asks to be picked up early from school

## What parents can do

- Insist that your child goes to school and then give him/her praise and positive attention for attending school.
- Discuss specific events that occurred at school, focusing on the positive and talking through specific problems together.
- If the child does stay home, it should not be “fun” — they should be doing school work.

## Why children avoid school

- **Social and performance-related fears** (difficulty making friends, lunchtime isolation, bullying)
- **General school-related anxiety/distress** (tests, teachers, riding a school bus)
- **Desire to spend time with others** (parents)
- **Desire to do fun activities outside of school** (play video games, watch TV)
- **Underlying anxiety disorders** (separation anxiety, panic disorder, selective mutism, social phobia)



Up to **35%** of school-age children display **school-resistant behaviors**

## When to ask for help

Start by speaking to your child’s teacher to find out if there are specific issues at school that could be causing your child anxiety, such as bullying, learning issues or being behind on course work. If the problem is significantly affecting your child’s life, seek a diagnostic assessment with a mental health provider who specializes in pediatric anxiety and behavioral avoidance.

