

Social Studies at Home

Social studies is all around us. Parents can help their student appreciate social studies in everyday life with these seven tips:

1 - Talk about the names of local places and landmarks.

Discuss how places and landmarks got their names with your student. For example, streets and parks are often named after local figures in your community's history. Ask your student, "Who do you think this person is? What did they contribute to our community?"

2 - Compare cities and states.

Cities and states have different laws, economic activities, and geographic features. Your student may notice that states have different license plates or industries. Talk with your student about those differences. Ask your student what geographic features are in your city and state and how they affect the way people live. Compare those geographic features to a community far away.

3 - Discuss the origin of holidays and traditions.

As you celebrate holidays, talk to your student about why we celebrate the day and point out the traditions we have. Ask questions like, "Why is this an important day to celebrate? What do we do each year on this day? How do you think these traditions started?"

4 - Point out services around you.

When visiting a library, picking up mail, or driving down the street, explain how taxes help pay for local services, public spaces, and roads. You can also point out that fire stations, the police, and schools are all funded by taxes. If there are tolls in your state, discuss or research how the money from tolls is used.

5 - Keep civic responsibilities top of mind.

From jury duty to voting, talk to your student about the importance of civic duties. Talk about the meaning and origin of common phrases, such as "we the people" and the rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Discuss the history of civil rights and how amendments—such as the Fifteenth and Nineteenth amendments—expanded voting rights.

6 - Read about current events together.

As you discuss the news, ask your student to share their questions and opinions supported with reasoning. Encourage your student to conduct further research about the news from reputable sources. When discussing and researching media, explain to your student the importance of evaluating sources.

7 - Practice map skills in the local community.

You can practice map reading with your student. Before going to the grocery store or school, have students chart the route on a map. Ask them, "Is this place to the north, south, east, or west of us?"