

2a Check (✓) the after-school activities you and your classmates usually do.

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| _____ do homework | _____ use the Internet |
| _____ have after-school lessons | _____ hang out with friends |
| _____ watch movies | _____ play sports or exercise |

2b Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What is the common problem for Chinese and American families?
2. Who gives their opinions about the problem?

Maybe You Should Learn to Relax!

These days, Chinese children are sometimes busier on weekends than weekdays because they have to take so many after-school classes. Many of them are learning exam skills so that they can get into a good high school and later a good university. Others are practicing sports so that they can **compete** and win. However, this doesn't only happen in China.

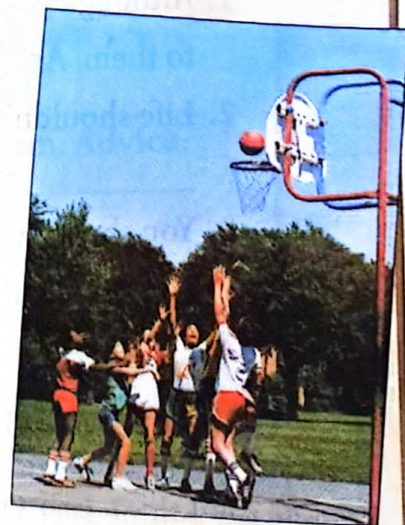
The Taylors are a **typical** American family. Life for Cathy Taylor's three children is very busy. "On most days after school," Cathy says, "I take one of my two boys to basketball practice and my daughter to football **training**. Then I have to take my other son to piano lessons. Maybe I could cut out a few of their activities, but I believe these activities are important for my children's future. I really want them to be successful." However, the tired children don't get home until after 7:00 p.m. They have a quick dinner, and then it's time for homework.

Linda Miller, a mother of three, knows all about such **stress**. "In some families, competition starts very young and **continues** until the kids get older," she says. "Mothers send their small kids to all kinds of classes. And they are always **comparing** them with other children. It's crazy. I don't think that's fair. Why don't they just let their kids be kids? People shouldn't push their kids so hard."

Doctors say too much pressure is not good for a child's **development**. Dr. Alice Green says all these activities can cause a lot of stress for children. "Kids should have time to relax and think for themselves, too. Although it's normal to want successful children, it's even more important to have happy children."

Guessing the Meaning

When reading something for the first time, do not worry about words you do not know. Use the context to help you guess the meaning.



- 2c** Look at the words in bold in the article. Can you guess their meanings? Try to match them with the meanings below.

1. Keeps on happening _____
2. Physical exercise and practice of skills _____
3. Worries about things at home, school or work _____
4. Usual or common _____
5. Try to be the best or the first to finish something _____
6. Getting better or bigger _____
7. Looking for differences and similarities between things _____

- 2d** Read the article again and answer the questions.

1. Does Cathy Taylor think it's important for kids to join after-school activities?
2. Does Linda Miller agree with Cathy? What's her opinion?
3. Does Dr. Green agree with Cathy or Linda? What does she say?

- 2e** Discuss the questions with your partner.

1. What do you think of after-school activities?
2. What should you do to relax?

- 3a** A magazine interviewed some parents about after-school classes for children. Read the opinions below and make notes on your own opinions.

Why should children take after-school classes?

Your opinions

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. "After-school classes can help kids get into a good university." | Agree: |
| 2. "I want my child to be a successful person." | Disagree: |
| 3. "It's good for children to start learning from a young age." | |