

## **Helping Your Child Study**

*Parents can do a great deal to assist their child in becoming a better student. School performance is influenced by behavior and attitudes. Successful students are able to display self-discipline, motivation, and relaxation when studying— an entire set of behaviors that can be called the “right attitude” for effective study. Below are ideas of how parents can support their child and help them to develop positive study skills/habits.*

### **Paying Attention**

Practice positive self-talk to use in order to help your child focus on school. For example, when facing a difficult task, a student can be taught to say, “I can do this assignment if I try.” This “self-talk” will trigger increased attention to that task. Avoid negative “self-talk”. Never threaten or order your child to pay attention because this technique does not work.

One of the best ways for a student to focus attention is to ask questions, so encourage your child to speak up. Parents can also help their child develop goals that will direct their attention on success at school. Many small goals will keep children on track better than one large goal of great difficulty.

### **Remembering**

Teach your child to build connections between new information and subjects already familiar to them, and to recognize the similarities and differences between the two. Children should learn to draw conclusions from the material they study. Pinpointing the main ideas expressed in each assignment will help a child gain understanding and confidence. Introduce your child to the technique of grouping data or information in order to better remember lists of dates, names, or other items.

### **Studying**

Designate a specific place and time to study. A good study spot should be quiet and well-lit. Show your child how to preview material. Encourage your student to read tables of contents, chapter headings, and summaries.

Help your child prepare for tests through a series of reviews spaced over many days prior to the test. “Cramming” is not a good idea. It is important to get a good night’s sleep before test day.

### **Maintaining Interest**

Children need to know that the hours they spend studying can make a difference between success and failure. It is easy for a student to assume that success is controlled by other factors, such as teachers, basic intelligence, or bad luck. Parents can encourage their child to accept individual responsibility.

For example, discuss test results to pinpoint the reasons for successes and failures. Praise your child for success, it is music to your child’s ears. Parents can also help their student stay interested by stressing the benefits of success at school, such as job opportunities and scholarship possibilities.

### **Being Prepared**

Set an example of good preparation in your own work and required duties. Encourage your child to maintain a planning calendar to avoid procrastination. By scheduling parts of larger tasks in several short work sessions, they will avoid missing deadlines.

Being prepared also means keeping the study area stocked with paper, pens, pencils, reference books, computer equipment, etc. Interruptions in study to locate materials can cause a great loss of time.

### **Learning Styles**

Teach your child about sensory channels, which students use when learning information. Students absorb information through the eyes, the ears, and with the muscles. The visual learner absorbs best with the eyes, the auditory learner uses the ears most effectively, and the kinesthetic learner learns best by acting out or writing down information.

All students use all three learning techniques, but research has shown that each individual is more finely tuned to one type of learning than another. Parents can help their child become a more effective learner simply by making them aware of the different ways learning can take place.

## Effective Study Habits

*The following time management strategies can be used to improve study habits. Help your child pick two or three to practice. Once these are mastered, choose a couple more.*

1. Study difficult or less interesting subjects first! If a certain subject is hard or puts you to sleep, tackle it first when you are fresh.
2. Be aware of your best time of day! Many people learn best in daylight hours. Observe yourself to find out if this is true for you. If it is, schedule study time during the day. If not, find out what time is best.
3. Use waiting time effectively! Ten minutes waiting on a bus or five minutes between classes can add up. Write short study tasks on 3x5 cards, e.g. formulas or definitions, and pull them out to study while waiting.
4. Use a regular study area! When you use the same place to study day after day, your body and mind become trained. It should help you focus better.
5. Don't get too comfortable! Easy chairs, the bed or a sofa are dangerous places to study. If too comfortable, your body may get the message "time to sleep" rather than "time to study".
6. Avoid noise distraction! Don't study in front of the television. If you do study better with music, make sure you select a kind that doesn't interfere with your concentration.
7. Avoid the phone! The telephone has perfected the act of interruption, but you don't have to be a telephone victim. Just say, "I can't talk right now. I'm studying." Wait to text back until after your work is finished.

## Managing Test Anxiety

*Test anxiety consists of two components – mental and physical. The mental component includes all thoughts and worries about tests, while the physical component includes feelings and tensions about tests. Several techniques are suggested below to help deal with both the mental and physical components of test anxiety.*

- Think positive thoughts. When your mind is filled with positive thoughts about an upcoming test, there will be no room left for anxious thoughts. Imagine yourself previewing the test and finding questions you can answer. Imagine yourself writing quickly and confidently. Think about how you will feel when you find out you have done well on the test. (Use these techniques whenever you begin to feel anxious. The more you practice this one, the better you will get.)
- Focus on the task at hand. When taking the test, keep your mind or thoughts on the questions of the test. Answer the questions. Don't spend time thinking about how you feel now or how you will feel if you don't do well. During the test, "worry" thoughts just use up valuable time and divert your attention from the task before you.
- Breathe. Calm the physical sensations within your body by focusing on your breathing. Concentrate on the air going in and out of your body. Experience it as it passes through your nose and mouth. Do this for three or four minutes. If you notice that you are taking short shallow breaths, make yourself take longer and deeper breaths. You will begin to feel yourself calm down.
- Becoming aware of the tension in your body is the first step in reducing it. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Begin with your feet. Focus your attention on the muscles in your feet and notice if they are relaxed. Move your neck, face, and scalp muscles. Make sure that each muscle group is relaxed before going on. Sometimes you may find that first tensing and then relaxing your muscles will permit you to relax more completely.

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