

Super Study Skills

Teach your child to study while he is in elementary school, and you will help him for a lifetime. What are the keys to successful studying? Getting organized, learning to concentrate, and developing techniques that work.

Share the following suggestions to put your youngster on the road to studying—and succeeding!

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Organization

Before your child can begin studying, he needs to be organized. Here's how you can help:

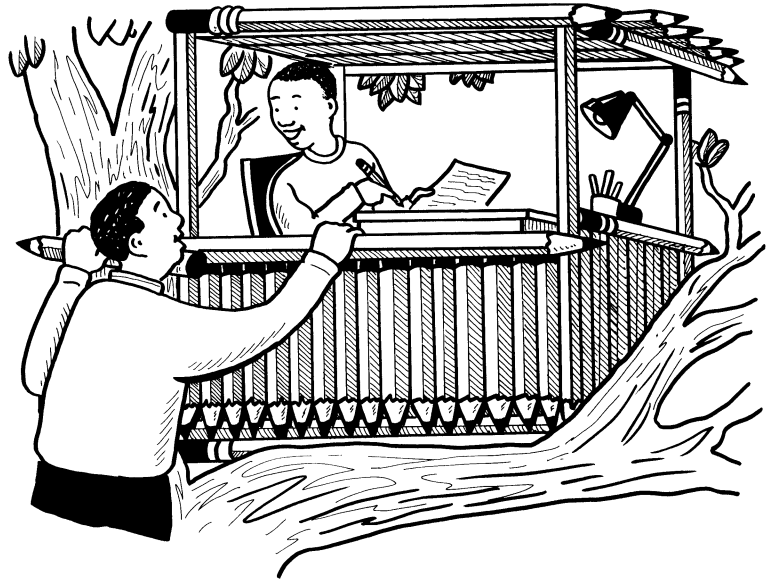
- Designate a place in your home for studying. Your youngster may prefer sitting in a quiet corner in the kitchen or sprawling on the floor in his room. The important thing is to have a place that has “Study here” written all over it. This means a clutter-free surface, good lighting, and a comfortable place to sit. Have reference materials handy, such as a dictionary, a thesaurus, and U.S. and world maps. *Tip:* Keep distractions to a minimum. Switch off the television, turn music down, and keep siblings from playing nearby.
- Put a stocked supply box in the study area. Supplies could include pencils, pens, highlighters, notebook paper, a ruler, scissors, glue, Scotch tape, colored pencils, markers, and a calculator.
- Encourage your youngster to write quiz, test, and project due dates on a calendar. Every Monday, have her write down what will be due that week. Help her divide the work to be done into small, manageable blocks, and set goals for each day. *Example:* Study spelling words on Monday and review multiplication facts on Tuesday for Wednesday's quizzes.

Concentration

When your youngster learns how to concentrate, she has won half the battle. Use these suggestions to strengthen your child's concentration skills:

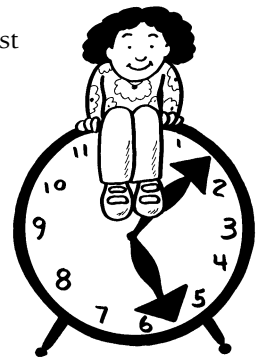


- Many children have trouble concentrating with an empty stomach. Before your youngster begins studying, give her a healthy, energy-boosting snack that



includes both protein and carbohydrates. Try peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, fruit smoothies, or English muffin pizzas.

- Is your child the most focused when he gets home from school, or is he more attentive after dinner? To find out, vary his study times for a week, and keep track of how long it takes him to finish his assignments. Then, choose a study time based on what works best for him.
- Getting the most difficult work done first can give your youngster a sense of accomplishment that will help her get through the rest. For example, she might work on a creative-writing assignment before studying her list of vocabulary words. *Hint:* She will be freshest when she first sits down to work.



Note taking

Learning to take notes at this young age will give your child a skill he will need throughout his school years. Have him try these ideas:

- While reading a chapter or listening in class, write down the main ideas that the book or teacher emphasizes—not everything you read or hear.
- Leave room between your notes so you can add more information later as you study or reread the material.
- Use “shorthand” to save time during note taking. *Examples:* “w/” for “with,” “o” for “over,” “bc” for “because,” “b4” for “before.”

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- Write question marks next to anything you don't understand. Look up the answers at home using a dictionary, your textbook, or the Internet, or ask the teacher the next day.

Reading comprehension

Successful studying starts with good reading. Here are some ways your youngster can better absorb what she reads:

- Stop and summarize. Have your child close the book after each paragraph or page and say what happened in her own words.
- Write it down. At the end of a chapter or a section, ask your youngster to write down the names of the characters and something to remember them by (Susan, the bossy sister); the setting (an old house in Boston); and a sentence or two summarizing what happened (Susan broke a lamp and made her sister take the blame).
- Compare it. Help your child relate what he reads to something familiar. *Example:* "The setting of the story is a beach town, just like the one we visited last summer."

Memorization

For some materials, memorization is the key to studying. Teach your child these tricks of the trade:

- Tell your youngster to visualize a familiar place—her house, her room, or her classroom—and put each fact she needs to remember in that place. For example, she could remember the planets as the rooms of the house: Mercury is the living room, Venus the dining room, Earth the kitchen, Mars the bathroom, and so on. Have her draw a map of where she put each fact.
- To help memorize names, suggest that your child combine them into a sentence. *Example:* When studying the presidents, he might say, "Abraham's cabin was made from Lincoln logs," "Gerald drives a Ford," and "George plants a Bush in his garden."



- Your youngster can make connections between the ideas she has to remember by creating a simple story. Suppose she needs to remember the steps of a science experiment.



She can make up a story: Joe had a *question*, so he created a *hypothesis* to answer his question. He designed a *procedure* for figuring out the answer. When he had his *results*, he came to his *conclusion*.

Tip: Encourage your child to make a list of his memory tricks. Writing them will help him remember—and he will have a study sheet to use.

Tips for tests

Share these ideas with your youngster the next time he studies for a test:

- Make flash cards. For example, put a vocabulary word on one side of an index card and the definition on the other side.
- Create time lines for historical facts.
- Quiz yourself, or ask Mom, Dad, or a babysitter to quiz you. Mix up the order of the questions each time.
- Ask your teacher for extra copies of science, math, or language arts worksheets, and do them again for practice.
- Make up your own quiz, and then take it.

