

Developing Good Study Skills in Children

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Students need a solid foundation in the area of study skills to successfully tackle the difficult tasks required of them as they get older. Parents and family can help children develop strong study skills at home. Children need guidance to learn how to study effectively after school. They need positive reinforcement as they gain independence in mastering various study skills. They almost need consistent support as they establish their most effective method of study. Where do the parents begin? For younger children, parents can help by:

1. Establishing routines in the home environment. Setting times for meals, sleep, family time, etc. should be consistent whenever possible.
2. Encouraging children to assume ownership for personal belongings. Have them select their clothes for the next day at bedtime, encourage them to have a special location to put all materials which need to be taken to school the following morning, insist on some degree of organization in their bedroom/play area.
3. Beginning to teach a sense of responsibility, even at the toddler/preschool age.
4. Having a daily reading time. Young children as well as older children need to establish a quiet time to foster the study skills habit. This time can be used for children to look at books, color pictures, or be read to.
5. Beginning to teach listening and concentration skills. Play listening games in the car, card and board games which require memory.
6. Limiting television watching. Have children "earn" a limited number of programs to watch. Experts say children should watch no more than an hour a day during the week or two hours on weekends.
7. Teaching habits such as being prompt, using free time wisely, and planning ahead.

Parents can help older children by encouraging them to:

1. Establish a study routine. Children learn more if they get into the habit of studying at the same time and in the same place each day. Help them decide on a regular time and assist them in finding a quiet, well-lighted spot.
2. Regardless of whether or not children have been assigned homework to complete, the daily study time should be enforced. If specific tasks have not been assigned, the study time should be spent engaging in pleasure reading, re-reading/copying class notes, preparing study cards, outlining a chapter in a content area text, et.
3. Keep assignments, long-term projects, upcoming tests, etc, written on daily assignment sheet or in a small spiral notebook. Necessary worksheets, materials, etc., should be kept in special color-coded folders.
4. Develop a method of study. Children should learn to read with a question in mind and summarize units of reading by taking notes in their own words.
5. Set goals. Children should learn to estimate how long a given assignment will take to complete and to divide their time effectively. Some children have found that it helps to make a list of tasks and then draw a line through each one as it is completed.
6. Reward achievements. For some children, it helps to take a snack break as goals are completed. For other children, taking a 5-minute walk outside, a 10-minute phone call to a friend, or whatever is rewarding can be helpful.

For addition information regarding this topic, suggested reading material available at local bookstores include the following:

Bean, Reynold and Clemes, Harris. How to Teach Children Responsibility.

Canter, Lee and Hausner, Lee. Homework Without Tears-A Parents Guide for Motivating Children to Do Homework and to Succeed in School.

Duckett, J.C. Helping Children Develop Good Study Habits: A Parent's Guide.