

Study Skills

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What are Study Skills?

- Development of tools and techniques that help a student understand new material or learn a new skill;
- Integration of new information with what a student already understands in a way that makes sense;
- Help to recall the information or skill later, even in a different situation or environment;
- Assist a student in becoming a more effective, purposeful, and independent learner.

Learning How to Learn

- Study skills take time to learn;
- Students need repeated practice with a variety of strategies and techniques;
- Skills need to be systematic, i.e., strategies are learned that work for most subjects and in different environments;
- Students benefit from knowing their best learning modes or styles.

Finding Time to Study

- Weekly family meeting to sync calendars.
- Use Weekly Schedule for students to block out time for studying.
- Think beyond after school. Is there time before school to complete an activity? Saturday morning? Sunday afternoon with a friend?
- Activity: Weekly Schedule

Planning

- Most children and adolescents need support in learning how to plan and prioritize.
- Create daily plan from Weekly Schedule Sheet or other weekly calendar.
- Estimate how long each assignment and activity will take; add start and stop times.
- Monitor to see if estimation is correct. “Is the assignment taking longer than the 30 minutes that you estimated?” rather than “Are you finished yet?”

Time Management

- Most critical component of developing time management skills is time estimation skills.
- Students may either overestimate, underestimate, or struggle with a sense of time.
- Most students today use digital clocks rather than analog clocks. According to research, it is now more difficult for them to process “We will need to finish in 30 minutes,” rather than “We will finish by 10:45.”

Planner

- Middle school is the perfect time to develop new habits with a planner; it is easier to learn a new habit than to break a bad one.
- Planner allows students to see the entire week; many online calendars and apps are more focused on day-to-day commitments. Learn how to use paper planner efficiently then move to apps.
- Students may need help in using planner; break down assignments into action steps. For example, a project that is due on Friday should have each step written down in planner for Monday through Thursday.

Homework Checklist

There is homework every night!

- Complete assignments due tomorrow;
- Prepare for tomorrow's test;
- Review and recite from today's classes;
- Review and recite from yesterday's classes;
- Look at the chapters to be discussed tomorrow in class;
- Plan a task list for long-term projects; add the tasks to the planner;
- Organize binders.

Study Area

- Most middle school students are not ready to study independently in their bedrooms.
- They need to be near adults for monitoring.
- If there is a study area, take a photo of it when it is set up correctly. Student can go back and take a look when organizing it again.
- Keep distractions to a minimum. Students cannot multi-task if though they think they can!

Organization

- Put a system in place that is simple but effective. May take trying two or three systems before finding one that fits.
- It is important to start very small ~have a system to place homework when completed or to place papers in the correct binder or to bring home needed materials from school. Focus on only one skill.
- Support/supervise daily and then gradually decrease the support.

Organization

- Color code notebooks, binders, pencil pouches, etc. for each class. Blue is history, red is math, etc.
- Create simple checklists for student to follow and support using the checklists. For example, create an end-of-the-day checklist for materials, books, etc. that need to come home.
- Remember ~ learning a new skill takes time. Don't become discouraged after a few days! New skills need to be explained, modeled, and reviewed.
- Give the student lots of opportunities to use the new skill, in different environments and with a variety of materials.

Studying Using Learning Preferences

Primary learning styles:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic or Tactile
- Logical
- Social vs solitary

Visual

See it to learn

Retain information presented in pictures, videos, graphs, and books.

Often takes detailed notes.

Likes to review information from textbooks.

Often doodles in notebooks.

Can be distracted by background noises.

Overwhelmed with too much talking or too many steps.

- Draw diagrams and pictures
- Use color coding to highlight different ideas
- Create mind maps and use graphic organizers
- Paint a wall with chalkboard paint
- Illustrate flashcards

Auditory

Hear and speak it to learn

Retains information better through verbal communication.

Likes listening to music while learning.

Solves problems by talking about them.

Prefers listening to reading and writing.

Can repeat verbal instructions almost word for word.

- Reduce notes to just main ideas with a few details
- Record information and then have the student listen to it
- Create musical jingles and mnemonics to learn facts
- Explain process to someone else
- Tell a story to connect new material

Kinesthetic

Touch, create, move to learn

Learn through hands-on participation.

Need to move and take frequent breaks.

Taps fingers or feet, wiggles in seat, frequently stands up to sharpen pencil, grab a glass of water, etc.

Needs to connect experiences with learning.

- Give real-life examples
- Pair learning with physical activity. For example, bounce basketball while learning spelling words, jump rope while reciting states and capitals
- Participate in labs, field trips, exhibits

Logical

Possess strong reasoning skills.

Notice patterns quickly.

Keen ability to link information that would seem nonrelated by others.

Often excel at math and science as value factual information.

- Write down information on note cards and then organize
- Create to do lists that are ranked from most to least important
- Develop games that incorporate concepts
- Use graphic organizers to see logical behind concepts

Social vs. Solitary

Social

- Usually have excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Enjoys learning in study groups.
- Will feel comfortable initiating conversations with teachers.

Solitary

- Prefer to work by themselves.
- Will try to solve problems independently.
- Find it difficult to ask for help, even from teachers.
- May analyze their methods and strategies frequently.

Resources

- There are many resources for teaching study skills often called executive function skills.
- Look for information that is based on research and best practices.
- With the development of apps for smart phones, tablets, etc., there are now a variety of downloads to support organization, time management, etc.